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THE SPORT OF THE GODS

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I.

THE HAMILTONS.

FICTION had said so much in regret of the old days when there were plantations and overseers and masters and slaves, that it was good to come upon such a household as Berry Hamilton's, if for no other reason than that it afforded a relief from the monotony of tiresome iteration.

The little cottage in which he lived with his wife, Fannie, who was housekeeper to the Oakleys, and his son and daughter, Joe and Kit, sat back in the yard some hundred paces from the mansion of his employer. It was somewhat in the manner of the old cabin in the quarters, with which usage as well as tradition had made both master and servant familiar. But unlike the cabin of the elder day, it was a neatly furnished, modern house, the home of a typical, good-living Negro. For twenty years Berry Hamilton had been butler for Maurice Oakley. He was one of the many slaves who upon their accession to freedom had not left the South, but had wandered from place to place in their own beloved section, waiting, working, and struggling to rise with its rehabilitated fortunes.

The first faint signs of recovery were being seen when he came to Maurice Oakley as a servant. Through thick and thin he remained with him, and when the final upward tendency of his employer began his fortunes had increased in like manner. When, having married, Oakley bought the great house in which he now lived, he left the little servants' cottage in the yard, for, as he said laughingly, "There is

no telling when Berry will be following my example and be taking a wife unto himself."

His joking prophecy came true very soon. Berry had long had a tenderness for Fannie, the housekeeper. As she retained her post under the new Mrs. Oakley, and as there was a cottage ready to his hand, it promised to be cheaper and more convenient all around to get married. Fannie was willing, and so the matter was settled.

Fannie had never regretted her choice, nor had Berry ever had cause to curse his utilitarian ideas. The stream of years had flowed pleasantly and peacefully with them. Their little sorrows had come, but their joys had been many.

As time went on the little cottage grew in comfort. It was replenished with things handed down from "the house" from time to time, and with others bought from the pair's earnings.

Berry had time for his lodge, and Fannie time to spare to her own house and garden. Flowers bloomed in the little plot in front of the cottage, and behind it vegetables and greens testified to the housewife's industry.

Over the door of the little house a fine Virginia creeper bent and fell in graceful curves, and a cluster of insistent morning-glories clung in summer about its stalwart stock.

It was into this bower of peace and comfort that Joe and Kitty were born. They brought a new sunlight into the house and a new joy to the father's and mother's hearts. Their early lives were pleasant and carefully guarded. They got what schooling the town afforded, but both went to work early, Kitty helping her mother and Joe as a barber.

Kit was the delight of her mother's life. She was a pretty, cheery little thing, and could sing like a lark. Joe too was of a cheerful disposition, but from scraping the chins of aristocrats he came to imbibe some of their ideas, and rather too early in life he bid fair to be a dandy. But his father encouraged him, for said he, "It's de p'opah thing fu' a man what waits on quality to have quality mannahts an' to waih quality clothes."

"'Tain't no use to be a-humo'in' dat boy too much, Be'y," Fannie had replied, although she did fully as much "humo'in'" as her husband; "hit sho' do mek' him biggety, an' a biggety po' niggah is a 'bomination befo' de face of de Lawd; but I know 'tain't no use a-talkin' to you, fu' you plum boun' up in dat Joe."

Her own eyes would follow the boy lovingly and proudly even as she chided. She could not say very much, either, for Berry always had the reply that she was spoiling Kit out of all reason. The girl did have the prettiest clothes of any of her race in the town, and when she was to sing for the benefit of the A. M. E. church or for the benefit of her

father's society, the Tribe of Benjamin, there was nothing too good for her to wear. In this too they were aided and abetted by Mrs. Oakley, who also took a lively interest in the girl.

So the two doting parents had their chats and their jokes at each other's expense and went bravely on, doing their duties and spoiling their children much as white fathers and mothers are wont to do.

What the less fortunate Negroes of the community said of them and their offspring is really not worth while. Envy has a sharp tongue, and when has not the aristocrat been the target for the plebeian's sneers?

Joe and Kit were respectively eighteen and sixteen at the time when the preparation for Maurice Oakley's farewell dinner to his brother Francis was agitating the whole Hamilton household. All of them had a hand in the work: Joe had shaved the two men; Kit had helped Mrs. Oakley's maid; the mother had fretted herself weak over the shortcomings of a cook that had been in the family nearly as long as herself, while Berry was stern and dignified in anticipation of the glorious figure he was to make in serving.

When all was ready, peace again settled upon the Hamiltons. Mrs. Hamilton, in the whitest of white aprons, prepared to be on hand to annoy the cook still more; Kit was ready to station herself where she could view the fine things; Joe had condescended to promise to be home in time to eat some of the good things, and Berry—Berry was gorgeous in his evening suit with the white waistcoat as he directed the nimble waiters hither and thither.

II.

A FAREWELL DINNER.

MAURICE OAKLEY was not a man of sudden or violent enthusiasms. Conservatism was the quality that had been the foundation of his fortunes at a time when the disruption of the country had involved most of the men of his region in ruin.

Without giving anyone ground to charge him with being lukewarm or renegade to his cause, he had yet so adroitly managed his affairs that when peace came he was able quickly to recover much of the ground lost during the war. With a rare genius for adapting himself to new conditions, he accepted the changed order of things with a passive resignation, but with a stern determination to make the most out of any good that might be in it.

It was a favorite remark of his that there must be some good in every system, and it was the duty of the citizens to find out that good and make it pay. He had done this. His house, his reputation, his satisfaction, were all evidences that he had succeeded.

A childless man, he bestowed upon his younger brother, Francis,

the enthusiasm he would have given to a son. His wife shared with her husband this feeling for her brother-in-law, and with him played the rôle of parent, which had otherwise been denied her.

It was true that Francis Oakley was only a half-brother to Maurice, the son of a second and not too fortunate marriage, but there was no halving of the love which the elder man had given to him from childhood up.

At the first intimation that Francis had artistic ability his brother had placed him under the best masters in America, and later, when the promise of his youth had begun to blossom, he sent him to Paris, although the expenditure just at that time demanded a sacrifice which might have been the ruin of Maurice's own career. Francis's promise had never come to entire fulfilment. He was always trembling on the verge of a great success without quite plunging into it. Despite the joy which his presence gave his brother and sister-in-law, most of his time was spent abroad, where he could find just the atmosphere that suited his delicate, artistic nature. After a visit of two months he was about returning to Paris for a stay of five years. At last he was going to apply himself steadily and try to be less the dilettante.

The company which Maurice Oakley brought together to say good-bye to his brother on this occasion was drawn from the best that this fine old Southern town afforded. There were colonels there at whose titles and the owners' rights to them no one could laugh; there were brilliant women there who had queened it in Richmond, Baltimore, Louisville, New Orleans, and every Southern capital under the old régime, and there were younger ones there of wit and beauty who were just beginning to hold their court. For Francis was a great favorite both with men and women. He was a handsome man, tall, slender, and graceful. He had the face and brow of a poet, a pallid face framed in a mass of dark hair. There was a touch of weakness in his mouth, but this was shaded and half hidden by a full mustache that made much forgivable to beauty-loving eyes.

It was generally conceded that Mrs. Oakley was a hostess whose guests had no awkward half-hour before dinner. No praise could be higher than this, and to-night she had no need to exert herself to maintain this reputation. Her brother-in-law was the life of the assembly; he had wit and daring; and about him there was just that hint of charming danger that made him irresistible to women. The guests heard the dinner announced with surprise, an unusual thing, except in this house.

Both Maurice Oakley and his wife looked fondly at the artist as he went in with Claire Lessing. He was talking animatedly to the girl, having changed the general trend of the conversation to a manner and tone directed more particularly to her. While she listened to him her

face glowed and her eyes shone with a light that every man could not bring into them.

As Maurice and his wife followed him with their gaze the same thought was in their minds, and it had not just come to them, Why could not Francis marry Claire Lessing and settle in America, instead of going back ever and again to that life in the Latin Quarter? They did not believe it was a bad life or a dissipated one, but from the little that they had seen of it when they were in Paris, it was at least a bit too free and unconventional for their traditions. There were too temptations which must assail any man of Francis's looks and talents. They had perfect faith in the strength of his manhood, of course; but could they have had their way, it would have been their will to hedge him about so that no breath of evil invitation could have come nigh to him.

But this younger brother, this half ward of theirs, was an unruly member. He talked and laughed, rode and walked, with Claire Lessing with the same free abandon, the same show of uninterested good comradeship, that he had used towards her when they were boy and girl together. There was not a shade more of warmth or self-consciousness in his manner towards her than there had been fifteen years before. In fact, there was less, for there had been a time, when he was six and Claire three, that Francis, with a boldness that the lover of maturer years tries vainly to attain, had announced to Claire that he was going to marry her. But he had never renewed this declaration when the time came that it would carry weight with it.

They made a fine picture as they sat together to-night. One seeing them could hardly help thinking for an instant that they were made for each other. Something in the woman's face, in her expression, perhaps, supplied a palpable lack in the man. The strength of her mouth and chin helped the weakness of his. She was the sort of woman who, if ever he came to a great moral crisis in his life, would be able to save him if she were near. And yet he was going away from her, giving up the pearl that he had only to put out his hand to take.

Something of these thoughts was in the minds of the brother and sister now.

"Five years does seem a long while," Francis was saying, "but if a man accomplishes anything, after all, it seems only a short time to look back upon."

"All time is short to look back upon. It's the looking forward to it that counts. It doesn't, though, with a man, I suppose. He's doing something all the while."

"Yes, a man is always doing something, even if only waiting; but waiting is such unheroic business."

"That is the part that usually falls to a woman's lot. I have no doubt that some dark-eyed mademoiselle is waiting for you now."

Francis laughed and flushed hotly. Claire noted the flush and wondered at it. Had she indeed hit upon the real point? Was that the reason that he was so anxious to get back to Paris? The thought struck a chill through her gayety. She did not want to be suspicious, but what was the cause of that tell-tale flush? He was not a man easily disconcerted, then why so to-night? But her companion talked on with such innocent composure that she believed herself mistaken as to the reason for his momentary confusion.

Someone cried gayly across the table to her, "Oh Miss Claire, you will not dare to talk with such little awe to our friend when he comes back with his ribbons and his medals. Why, we shall all have to bow to you, Frank!"

"You're wronging me, Esterton," said Francis. "No foreign decoration could ever be to me as much as the flower of approval from the fair women of my own State."

"Hear!" cried the ladies.

"Trust artists and poets to pay pretty compliments, and this wily friend of mine pays his at my expense."

"A good bit of generalship that, Frank," an old military man broke in. "Esterton opened the breach and you at once galloped in. That's the highest art of war."

Claire was looking at her companion. Had he meant the approval of the women, or was it one woman that he cared for? Had the speech had a hidden meaning for her? She could never tell. She could not understand this man who had been so much to her for so long, and yet did not seem to know it; who was full of romance and fire and passion, and yet looked at her beauty with the eyes of a mere comrade. She sighed as she rose with the rest of the women to leave the table.

The men lingered over their cigars. The wine was old and the stories new. What more could they ask? There was a strong glow in Francis Oakley's face, and his laugh was frequent and ringing. Some discussion came up which sent him running up to his room for a bit of evidence. When he came down it was not to come directly to the dining-room. He paused in the hall and despatched a servant to bring his brother to him.

Maurice found him standing weakly against the railing of the stairs. Something in his air impressed his brother strangely.

"What is it, Francis?" he questioned, hurrying to him.

"I have just discovered a considerable loss," was the reply in a grieved voice.

"If it is no worse than loss, I am glad; but what is it?"

"Every cent of money that I had to secure my letter of credit is gone from my bureau."

"What? When did it disappear?"

"I went to my bureau to-night for something and found the money gone; then I remembered that when I was in it two days ago I must have left the key in the lock, as I found it to-night."

"It's a bad business, but don't let's talk of it now. Come, let's go back to our guests. Don't look so cut up about it, Frank, old man. It isn't as bad as it might be, and you mustn't show a gloomy face to-night."

The younger man pulled himself together and reëntered the room with his brother. In a few minutes his gayety had apparently returned.

When they rejoined the ladies, even their quick eyes could detect no trace in his demeanor of the annoying thing that had occurred. His face did not change until, with a wealth of fervent congratulations, he had bade the last guest good-by.

Then he turned to his brother. "When Leslie is in bed, come into the library; I will wait for you there," he said, and walked sadly away.

"Poor, foolish Frank," mused his brother; "as if the loss could matter to him."

III.

THE THEFT.

FRANK was very pale when his brother finally came to him at the appointed place. He sat limply in his chair, his eyes fixed upon the floor.

"Come, brace up, now, Frank, and tell me about it."

At the sound of his brother's voice he started and looked up as though he had been dreaming.

"I don't know what you'll think of me, Maurice," he said. "I have never before been guilty of such criminal carelessness."

"Don't stop to accuse yourself. Our only hope in this matter lies in prompt action. Where was the money?"

"In the oak cabinet and lying in the bureau drawer. Such a thing as theft seemed so foreign to this place that I was never very particular about the box. But I did not know until I went to it to-night that the last time I had opened it I had forgotten to take the key out. It all flashed over me in a second when I saw it shining there. Even then I didn't suspect anything. You don't know how I felt to open that cabinet and find all my money gone. It's awful."

"Don't worry. How much was there in all?"

"Nine hundred and eighty-six dollars, most of which, I am ashamed to say, I had accepted from you."

"You have no right to talk that way, Frank; you know I do not begrudge a cent you want. I have never felt that my father did quite right in leaving me the bulk of his little fortune; but we won't discuss that now. What I want you to understand, though, is that the money is yours as well as mine, and you are always welcome to it."

The artist shook his head. "No, Maurice," he said, "I can accept no more from you. I have already used up all my own money and too much of yours in this hopeless fight. I don't suppose I was ever cut out for an artist, or I'd have done something really notable in this time, and would not be a burden upon those who care for me. No, I'll give up going to Paris and find some work to do."

"Frank, Frank, be silent. This is nonsense. Give up your art? You shall not do it. You shall go to Paris as usual. Leslie and I have perfect faith in you. You shall not give up on account of this misfortune. What are the few paltry dollars to me or to you?"

"Nothing, nothing, I know. It isn't the money, it's the principle of the thing."

"Principle be hanged! You go back to Paris to-morrow, just as you had planned. I do not ask it, I command it."

The younger man looked up quickly.

"Pardon me, Frank, for using those words and at such a time. You know how near my heart your success lies, and to hear you talk of giving it all up makes me forget myself. Forgive me; but you'll go back, won't you?"

"You are too good, Maurice," said Frank impulsively, "and I will go back, and I'll try to redeem myself."

"There is no redeeming of yourself to do, my dear boy; all you have to do is to mature yourself. We'll have a detective down and see what we can do in this matter."

Frank gave a scarcely perceptible start. "I do so hate such things," he said; "and, anyway, what's the use? They'll never find out where the stuff went to."

"Oh, you need not be troubled in this matter. I know that such things must jar on your delicate nature. But I am a plain, hard-headed business man, and I can attend to it without distaste."

"But I hate to shove everything unpleasant off on you. It's what I've been doing all my life."

"Never mind that. Now tell me, who was the last person you remember in your room?"

"Oh, Esterton was up there awhile before dinner. But he was not alone two minutes."

"He would be out of the question anyway. Who else?"

"Why, Hamilton was up yesterday."

"Alone?"

"Yes, for awhile. His boy, Joe, shaved me, and Jack was up for awhile brushing my clothes."

"Then it lies between Jack and Joe?"

Frank hesitated.

"Neither one was left alone, though."

"Then only Hamilton and Esterton have been alone for any time in your room since you left the key in your cabinet?"

"Those are the only ones of whom I know anything. What others went in during the day, of course, I know nothing about. It couldn't have been either Esterton or Hamilton."

"Not Esterton, no."

"And Hamilton is beyond suspicion."

"No servant is beyond suspicion."

"I would trust Hamilton anywhere," said Frank stoutly, "and with anything."

"That's noble of you, Frank, and I would have done the same; but we must remember that we are not in the old days now. The Negroes are becoming less faithful and less contented, and, more's the pity, a deal more ambitious, although I have never had any unfaithfulness on the part of Hamilton to complain of before."

"Then do not condemn him now."

"I shall not condemn anyone until I have proof positive of his guilt or such clear circumstantial evidence that my reason is satisfied."

"I do not believe that you will ever have that against old Hamilton."

"This spirit of trust does you credit, Frank, and I very much hope that you may be right. But as soon as a Negro like Hamilton learns the value of money and begins to earn it, at the same time he begins to covet some easy and rapid way of securing it. The old Negro knew nothing of the value of money. When he stole, he stole hams and bacon and chickens. These were his immediate necessities and the things he valued. The present laughs at this tendency without knowing the cause. The new Negro resents the laugh, and he has learned to value other things than those which satisfy his belly."

Frank looked bored.

"But pardon me for boring you. I know you want to go to bed. Go and leave everything to me."

The young man reluctantly withdrew, and Maurice went to the telephone and rang up the police station.

As Maurice had said, he was a plain, hard-headed business man, and it took very few words for him to put the Chief of Police in possession of the principal facts of the case. A detective was detailed to take charge of the case and was started immediately, so that he might be upon the ground as soon after the commission of the crime as possible.

When he came he insisted that if he was to do anything he must question the robbed man and search his room at once. Oakley protested, but the detective was adamant. Even now the presence in the room of a man uninitiated into the mysteries of criminal methods

might be destroying the last vestige of a really important clue. The master of the house had no alternative save to yield. Together they went to the artist's room, and with little delay were admitted.

To the detective's questions Frank answered in substance what he had told before. He also brought out the cabinet. It was a strong oak box, uncarven, but bound at the edges with brass. The key was still in the lock, where Frank had left it on discovering his loss. They raised the lid. The cabinet contained two compartments, one for letters and a smaller one for jewels and trinkets.

The detective examined the room carefully, its approaches, and the hall-ways without. He paused knowingly at a window that overlooked the flat top of a porch.

"Do you ever leave this window open?"

"It is almost always so."

"Is this porch on the front of the house?"

"No, on the side."

"What else is out that way?"

Frank and Maurice looked at each other. The younger man hesitated and put his hand to his head. Maurice answered grimly, "My butler's cottage is on that side and a little way back."

"Uh huh! and your butler is, I believe, the Hamilton whom the young gentleman mentioned some time ago?"

"Yes."

Frank's face was really very white now. The detective nodded again.

"I think I have a clue," he said simply. "I will be here again tomorrow morning."

"But I shall be gone," said Frank.

"You will hardly be needed, anyway."

The artist gave a sigh of relief. He hated to be involved in unpleasant things. He went as far as the outer door with his brother and the detective. As he bade the officer good-night and hurried up the hall Frank put his hand to his head again with a convulsive gesture, as if struck by a sudden pain.

"Come, come, Frank, you must take a drink now and go to bed," said Oakley. "I am no less shocked than you. But we've got to face it like men."

They passed into the dining-room, where Maurice poured out some brandy for his brother and himself. "Who would have thought it?" he asked as he tossed his own down.

"Not I. I had hoped against hope until the last that it would turn out to be a mistake."

"Nothing angers me so much as being deceived by the man I have helped and trusted. I should feel the sting of all this much less if

the thief had come from the outside, broken in, and robbed me, but this, after all these years, is too low."

"Don't be hard on the man, Maurice; one never knows what prompts him to a deed. And this evidence is all circumstantial."

"It is plain enough for me. You are entirely too kind-hearted, Frank. But I see that this thing has worn you out. You must not stand here talking. Go to bed, for you must be fresh for to-morrow morning's journey to New York."

Frank Oakley turned away towards his room. His face was haggard, and he staggered as he walked. His brother looked after him with a pitying and affectionate gaze.

"Poor fellow," he said, "he is so delicately constructed that he cannot stand such shocks as these," and then he added: "To think of that black hound's treachery! I'll give him all that the law sets down for him."

He found Mrs. Oakley asleep when he reached the room, but he awakened her to tell her the story. She was horror-stricken. It was hard to have to believe this awful thing of an old servant, but she agreed with him that Hamilton must be made an example of when the time came. Before that, however, he must not know that he was suspected.

IV.

FROM A CLEAR SKY.

THE inmates of the Oakley house had not been long in their beds before Hamilton was out of his and rousing his own little household.

"You, Joe!" he called to his son, "git up f'om daih an' come right yyeah. You got to he'p me befo' you go to any shop dis mo'nin'. You, Kitty, stir yo' stumps, miss. I know yo' ma's a-dressin' now."

It was just the morning to doze in comfort, and so thought all of Berry's household except himself. Loud was the complaining as they threw themselves out of bed. Even Mrs. Hamilton added her protest, until she suddenly remembered what morning it was, when she hurried into her clothes and set about getting the family's breakfast.

The good-humor of all of them returned when they were seated about their table with some of the good things of the night before set out, and the talk ran cheerily around.

Joe did not condescend to join in the conversation, but contented himself with devouring the good things and aping the manners of the young men whom he knew had been among last night's guests.

"Well, I got to be goin'," said Berry, rising. "There'll be early breakfas' at de 'house' dis mo'nin' so's Mistah Frank kin ketch de fus' train." He went out cheerily to his work. No shadow of impending disaster depressed his spirits. No cloud obscured his sky. He was a

simple, easy man, and he saw nothing in the manner of the people whom he served that morning at breakfast save a natural grief at parting from each other. He did not even take the trouble to inquire who the strange white man was who hung about the place.

When it came time for the young man to leave, with the privilege of an old servitor Berry went up to him to bid him good-by. He held out his hand to him, and with a glance at his brother Frank took it and shook it cordially. "Good-by, Berry," he said. Maurice could hardly restrain his anger at the sight, but his wife was moved to tears at her brother-in-law's generosity.

The last sight they saw as the carriage rolled away towards the station was Berry standing upon the steps waving a hearty farewell and God-speed.

"How could you do it, Frank?" gasped his brother as soon as they had driven well out of hearing.

"Hush, Maurice," said Mrs. Oakley gently; "I think it was very noble of him."

"Oh, I felt sorry for the poor fellow," was Frank's reply. "Promise me you won't be too hard on him, Maurice. Give him a little scare and let him go. He's possibly buried the money, anyhow."

"I shall deal with him as he deserves."

The young man sighed and was silent the rest of the way.

"Whether I fail or succeed, you will always think well of me, Maurice?" he said in parting; "and if I don't come up to your expectations, well—forgive me—that's all."

His brother wrung his hand. "You will always come up to my expectations, Frank," he said. "Won't he, Leslie?"

"He will always be our Frank, our good, generous-hearted, noble boy. God bless him!"

The young fellow bade them a hearty good-by, and they, knowing what his feelings must be, spared him the prolonging of the strain. They waited in the carriage, and he waved to them as the train rolled out of the station.

"He seems to be sad at going," said Mrs. Oakley.

"Poor fellow, the affair of last night has broken him up considerably, but I'll make Berry pay for every pang of anxiety that my brother has suffered."

"Don't be revengeful, Maurice; you know what brother Frank asked of you."

"He is gone and will never know what happens, so I may be as revengeful as I wish."

The detective was waiting on the lawn when Maurice Oakley returned. They went immediately to the library, Oakley walking with the firm, hard tread of a man who is both exasperated and determined,

and the officer gliding along with the cat-like step which is one of the attributes of his profession.

"Well?" was the impatient man's question as soon as the door closed upon them.

"I have some more information that may or may not be of importance."

"Out with it; maybe I can tell."

"First, let me ask if you had any reason to believe that your butler had any resources of his own, say to the amount of three or four hundred dollars?"

"Certainly not. I pay him thirty dollars a month, and his wife fifteen dollars, and with keeping up his lodges and the way he dresses that girl, he can't save very much."

"You know that he did have money in the bank?"

"No."

"Well, he has. Over eight hundred dollars."

"What? Berry? It must be the pickings of years."

"And yesterday it was increased by five hundred more."

"The scoundrel!"

"How was your brother's money, in bills?"

"It was in large bills and gold, with some silver."

"Berry's money was almost all in bills of a small denomination and silver."

"A poor trick: it could easily have been changed."

"Not such a sum without exciting comment."

"He may have gone to several places."

"But he had only a day to do it in."

"Then someone must have been his accomplice."

"That remains to be proven."

"Nothing remains to be proven. Why, it's as clear as day that the money he has is the result of a long series of peculations, and that this last is the result of his first large theft."

"That must be made clear to the law."

"It shall be."

"I should advise, though, no open proceedings against this servant until further evidence to establish his guilt is found."

"If the evidence satisfies me, it must be sufficient to satisfy any ordinary jury. I demand his immediate arrest."

"As you will, sir. Will you have him called here and question him, or will you let me question him at once?"

"Yes."

Oakley struck the bell, and Berry himself answered it.

"You're just the man we want," said Oakley shortly. Berry looked astonished.

"Shall I question him," asked the officer, "or will you?"

"I will. Berry, you deposited five hundred dollars at the bank yesterday?"

"Well, suh, Mistah Oakley," was the grinning reply, "ef you ain't de beatenes' man to fin' out things I evah see."

The employer half rose from his chair. His face was livid with anger. But at a sign from the detective he strove to calm himself.

"You had better let me talk to Berry, Mr. Oakley," said the officer.

Oakley nodded. Berry was looking distressed and excited. He seemed not to understand it at all.

"Berry," the officer pursued, "you admit having deposited five hundred dollars in the bank yesterday?"

"Sut'ny. Dey ain't no reason why I shouldn't, 'ceptin' erroun' ermong dese jealous niggahs."

"Uh huh! Well, now, where did you get this money?"

"Why, I wo'ked fu' it, o' co'se; whaih you s'pose I got it? 'Tain't drappin' off trees, I reckon, not roun' dis pa't of de country."

"You worked for it? You must have done a pretty big job to have got so much money all in a lump."

"But I didn't git it in a lump. Why, man, I've been savin' dat money fu' mo'n fo' yeahs."

"More than four years? Why didn't you put it in the bank as you got it?"

"Why, mos'ly it was too small, an' so I des' kep' it in a ol' sock. I tol' Fannie dat some day ef de bank didn' bus' wid all de res' I had, I'd put it in too. She was allus sayin' it was too much to have layin' 'roun' de house. But I des' tol' huh dat no robber was'n goin' to bothah de po' niggah down in de ya'd wid de rich white man up at de house. But finally I listened to huh an' deposited it yistiddy."

"You're a liar! you're a liar, you black thief!" Oakley broke in impetuously. "You have learned your lesson well, but you can't cheat me. I know where that money came from."

"Calm yourself, Mr. Oakley, calm yourself."

"I will not calm myself. Take him away. He shall not stand here and lie to me."

Berry had suddenly turned ashen.

"You say you know whaih dat money come f'om? Whaih?"

"You stole it, you thief, from my brother Frank's room."

"Stole it! My Gawd, Mistah Oakley, you believed a thing lak dat aftah all de yeahs I been wid you?"

"You've been stealing all along."

"Why, what shell I do?" said the servant helplessly. "I tell you, Mistah Oakley, ask Fannie. She'll know how long I been a-savin' dis money."

"I'll ask no one."

"I think it would be better to call his wife, Mr. Oakley."

"Well, call her; but let this matter be done with soon."

Fannie was summoned, and when the matter was explained to her, first gave evidences of giving way to grief, but when the detective began to question her, she calmed herself and answered directly just as her husband had.

"Well posted," sneered Oakley. "Arrest that man."

Berry had begun to look more hopeful during Fannie's recital, but now the ashen look came back into his face. At the word "arrest" his wife collapsed utterly, and sobbed on her husband's shoulder.

"Send that woman away."

"I won't go," cried Fannie stoutly; "I'll stay right hyeah by my husband. You sha'n't drive me away f'om him."

Berry turned to his employer. "You b'lieve dat I stole f'om dis house aftah all de yeahs I've been in it, aftah de caih I took of yo' money an' yo' valyables, aftah de way I've put you to bed f'om many a dinnah, an' you woke up to fin' all yo' money safe? Now, can you believe dis?"

His voice broke, and he ended with a cry.

"Yes, I believe it, you thief, yes. Take him away."

Berry's eyes were bloodshot as he replied: "Den damn you! damn you! Ef dat's all dese yeahs counted fu', I wish I had a-stoled it!"

Oakley made a step forward and his man did likewise, but the officer stepped between them.

"Take that damned hound away, or, by God! I'll do him violence."

The two men stood fiercely facing each other, then the handcuffs were snapped on the servant's wrists.

"No, no!" shrieked Fannie, "you mustn't, you mustn't. Oh, my Gawd! he ain't no thief. I'll go to Mis' Oakley. She nevah will believe it." She sped from the room.

The commotion had called a crowd of curious servants into the hall. Fannie hardly saw them as she dashed among them, crying for her mistress. In a moment she returned, dragging Mrs. Oakley by the hand.

"Tell 'em, oh, tell 'em, Miss Leslie, dat you don't believe it. Don't let 'em 'rest Berry."

"Why, Fannie, I can't do anything. It all seems perfectly plain, and Mr. Oakley knows better than any of us, you know."

Fannie, her last hope gone, flung herself on the floor, crying, "Oh Gawd! oh Gawd! he's gone fu' sho'!"

Her husband bent over her, the tears dropping from his eyes. "Nevah min,' Fannie," he said, "nevah min.' Hit's boun' to come out all right."

She raised her head, and seizing his manacled hands pressed them to her breast, wailing in a low monotone, "Gone! gone!"

V.

THE JUSTICE OF MEN.

THE arrest of Berry Hamilton on the charge preferred by his employer was the cause of unusual commotion in the town. Both the accuser and the accused were well known to the citizens, white and black. The evening papers had a full story of the crime, which closed by saying that the prisoner had amassed a considerable sum of money, it was very likely from a long series of smaller peculations.

It seems a strange irony upon the force of right living that this man, who had never been arrested before, who had never even been suspected of wrong-doing, should find so few who even at the first telling doubted the story of his guilt. Many people began to remember things that had looked particularly suspicious in his dealings. Some others said, "I didn't think it of him." There were only a few who dared to say, "I don't believe it of him."

The first act of his lodge, "The Tribe of Benjamin," whose treasurer he was, was to have his accounts audited, when they should have been visiting him with comfort, and they seemed personally aggrieved when his books were found to be straight. The A. M. E. church, of which he had been an honest and active member, hastened to disavow sympathy with him, and to purge itself of contamination by turning him out.

In the black people of the town the strong influence of slavery was still operative, and with one accord they turned away from one of their own kind upon whom had been set the ban of the white people's displeasure. If they had sympathy, they dared not show it. Their own interests, the safety of their own positions and firesides, demanded that they stand aloof from the criminal. Not then, not now, nor has it ever been true, although it has been claimed, that negroes either harbor or sympathize with the criminal of their kind. They did not dare to do it before the sixties. They do not dare to do it now. They have brought down as a heritage from the days of their bondage both fear and disloyalty. So Berry was unbefriended while the storm raged around him.

"Tell me, tell me," said one, "you needn't tell me dat a bird kin fly so high dat he don' have to come down some time. An' w'en he do light, honey, my Lawd, how he flop!"

"Mistah Rich Niggah," said another. "He wanted to dress his wife an' chillen lak white folks, did he? Well, he foun' out, he foun' out. By de time de judge git thoo wid him he won't be hol'in' his haid so high."

"W'y, dat gal o' his'n," broke in old Isaac Brown indignantly, "w'y, she wouldn't speak to my gal, Minty, when she met huh on de street. I reckon she come down off'n huh high hoss now."

The fact of the matter was that Minty Brown was no better than she should have been, and did not deserve to be spoken to. But none of this was taken into account either by the speaker or his hearers. The man was down, it was time to strike.

The women too joined their shrill voices to the general cry, and were loud in their abuse of the Hamiltons and in disparagement of their high-toned airs.

"I knowed it, I knowed it," mumbled one old crone, rolling her bleared and jealous eyes with glee. "W'enevah you see niggahs gittin' so high dat dey own folks ain' good enough fu' 'em, look out."

"W'y, la, Aunt Chloe, I knowed it too. Dem people got so owda-cious proud dat dey wouldn't walk up to de collection-table no mo' at chu'ch, but allus set an' waited twell de basket was passed erroun'."

The whites were not neglecting to review and comment on the case also. It had been long since so great a bit of wrong-doing in a negro had given them cause for speculation and recrimination.

"I tell you," said old Horace Talbot, who was noted for his kindness towards people of color,— "I tell you, I pity that darky more than I blame him. Now, here's my theory." They were in the bar of the Continental Hotel, and the old gentleman sipped his liquor as he talked. "It's just like this: The North thought they were doing a great thing when they came down here and freed all the slaves. They thought they were doing a great thing, and I'm not saying a word against them. I give them the credit for having the courage of their convictions. But I maintain that they were all wrong in turning these people loose upon the country the way they did, without knowledge of what the first principle of liberty was. The natural result is that these people are irresponsible. They are unacquainted with the ways of our higher civilization, and it'll take them a long time to learn. You know Rome wasn't built in a day. I know Berry, and I've known him for a long while, and a politer, likelier darky than him you would have to go far to find. And I haven't the least doubt in the world that he took that money absolutely without a thought of wrong, sir, absolutely. He saw it; he took it, and to his mental process that was the end of it. To him there was no injury inflicted on anyone, there was no crime committed. His elemental reasoning was simply this—'This man has more money than I have; here is some of his surplus,—I'll just take it.' Why, gentlemen, I maintain that that man took that money with the same innocence of purpose with which one of our servants a few years ago would have appropriated a stray ham."

"I disagree with you entirely, Mr. Talbot," broke in Mr. Beachfield Davis, who was a mighty hunter. "Make mine the same, Jerry, only add a little syrup. I disagree with you. It's simply total depravity, that's all. All niggers are alike, and there's no use trying to do anything with them. Look at that man, Dodson, of mine. I had one of the finest young hounds in the State. You know that white pup of mine, Mr. Talbot, that I bought from Hiram Gaskins? Mighty fine breed. Well, I was spendin' all my time and patience trainin' that dog in the daytime. At night I put him in that nigger's care to feed and bed. Well, do you know, I came home the other night and found that black rascal gone? I went out to see if the dog was properly bedded, and, by Jove! the dog was gone too. Then I got suspicious. When a nigger and a dog go out together at night one draws certain conclusions. I thought I heard baying way out towards the edge of the town. So I stayed outside and watched. In about an hour here came Dodson with a possum hung over his shoulder and my dog trottin' at his heels. He'd been possum-huntin' with my hound—with the finest hound in the State, suh. Now, I appeal to you all, gentlemen, if that ain't total depravity, what is total depravity?"

"Not total depravity, Beachfield, I maintain, but the very irresponsibility of which I have spoken. Why, gentlemen, I foresee the day when these people themselves shall come to us Southerners of their own accord and asked to be reënslaved until such time as they shall be fit for freedom." Old Horace was nothing if not logical.

"Well, do you think there's any doubt of the darky's guilt?" asked Colonel Saunders hesitatingly. He was the only man who had ever thought of such a possibility. They turned on him as if he had been some strange, unnatural animal.

"Any doubt?" cried old Horace.

"Any doubt?" exclaimed Mr. Davis.

"Any doubt?" almost shrieked the rest. "Why, there can be no doubt. Why, Colonel, what are you thinking of? Tell us who has got the money if he hasn't? Tell us where on earth the nigger got the money he's been putting in the bank? Doubt? Why, there isn't the least doubt about it."

"Certainly, certainly," said the Colonel, "but I thought, of course, he might have saved it. There are several of these people, you know, who do a little business and have bank accounts."

"Yes, but they are in some sort of business. This man makes only thirty dollars a month. Don't you see?"

The Colonel saw, or said he did. And he did not answer what he might have answered, that Berry had no rent and no board to pay. His clothes came from his master, and Kittie and Fannie looked to their mistress for the larger number of their supplies. He did not call

to their minds that Fannie herself made fifteen dollars a month, and that for two years Joe had been supporting himself. These things did not come up, and as far as the opinion of the gentlemen assembled in the Continental bar went, Berry was already proven guilty.

As for the prisoner himself, after the first day when he had pleaded "not guilty" and been bound over to the Grand Jury he had fallen into a sort of dazed calm that was like the stupor produced by a drug. He took little heed of what went on around him. The shock had been too sudden for him, and it was as if his reason had been for the time unseated. That it was not permanently overthrown was evidenced by his waking to the most acute pain and grief whenever Fannie came to him. Then he would toss and moan and give vent to his sorrow in passionate complaints.

"I didn't tech his money, Fannie, you know I didn't. I wo'ked fu' every cent of dat money, an' I saved it myself. Oh, I'll nevah be able to git a job ag'in. Me in de lock-up,—me, aftah all dese yeahs!"

Beyond this, apparently, his mind could not go. That his detention was anything more than temporary never seemed to enter his mind. That he would be convicted and sentenced was as far from possibility as the skies from the earth.

Fannie was utterly hopeless. She had laid down whatever pride had been hers and gone to plead with Maurice Oakley for her husband's freedom, and she had seen his hard, set face. She had gone upon her knees before his wife to cite Berry's long fidelity.

"Oh, Mis' Oakley," she cried, "ef he did steal de money, we've got enough saved to mek it good. Let him go! let him go!"

"Then you admit that he did steal?" Mrs. Oakley had taken her up sharply.

"Oh, I didn't say dat; I didn't mean dat."

"That will do, Fannie. I understand perfectly. You should have confessed that long ago."

"But I ain't confessin'! I ain't! He didn't——"

"You may go."

The stricken woman reeled out of her mistress's presence, and Mrs. Oakley told her husband that night with tears in her eyes how disappointed she was with Fannie. That the woman had known it all along, and had only just confessed. It was just one more link in the chain that was surely and not too slowly forging itself about Berry Hamilton.

Of all the family Joe was the only one who burned with a fierce indignation. He knew that his father was innocent, and his very helplessness made a fever in his soul. Dandy as he was, he was loyal, and when he saw his mother's tears and his sister's shame, something rose within him that had it been given play might have made a man

of him, but, being crushed, died and rotted, and in the compost it made all the evil of his nature flourished. The looks and gibes of his fellow-employees at the barber-shop forced him to leave his work there. Kit, bowed with shame and grief, dared not appear upon the streets, where the girls who had envied her now hooted at her. So the little family was shut in upon itself away from fellowship and sympathy.

Joe went seldom to see his father. He was not heartless; but the citadel of his long-desired and much-vaunted manhood trembled before the sight of his father's abject misery. The lines came round his lips, and lines too must have come round his heart. Poor fellow, he was too young for this forcing process, and in the hothouse of pain he only grew an acrid, unripe cynic.

At the sitting of the Grand Jury Berry was indicted. His trial followed soon, and the town turned out to see it. Some came to laugh and scoff, but these, his enemies, were silenced by the spectacle of his grief. In vain the lawyer whom he had secured showed that the evidence against him proved nothing. In vain he produced proof of the slow accumulation of what the man had. In vain he pleaded the man's former good name. The judge and the jury saw otherwise. Berry was convicted. He was given ten years at hard labor.

He hardly looked as if he could live out one as he heard his sentence. But nature was kind and relieved him of the strain. With a cry as if his heart were bursting, he started up and fell forward on his face unconscious.

Maurice Oakley sat in the court-room, grim and relentless. As soon as the trial was over he sent for Fannie, who still kept the cottage in the yard.

"You must go," he said. "You can't stay here any longer. I want none of your breed about me."

And Fannie bowed her head and went away from him in silence.

All the night long the women of the Hamilton household lay in bed and wept, clinging to each other in their grief. But Joe did not go to sleep. Against all their entreaties, he stayed up. He put out the light and sat staring into the gloom with hard, burning eyes.

VI.

OUTCASTS.

WHAT particularly irritated Maurice Oakley was that Berry should to the very last keep up his claim of innocence. He reiterated it to the very moment that the train which was bearing him away pulled out of the station. There had seldom been seen such an example of criminal hardihood, and Oakley was hardened thereby to greater severity in dealing with the convict's wife. He began to urge her more strongly to move, and she, dispirited and humiliated by what had come

to her, looked vainly about for the way to satisfy his demands. With her natural protector gone, she felt more weak and helpless than she had thought it possible to feel. It was hard enough to face the world; but to have to ask something of it was almost more than she could bear.

With the conviction of her husband the last five hundred dollars had been confiscated as belonging to the stolen money, but their former deposit remained untouched. With this she had the means at her disposal to tide over their present days of misfortune. It was not money she lacked, but confidence. Some inkling of the world's attitude towards her, guiltless though she was, reached her and made her afraid.

Her desperation, however, would not let her give way to fear, so she set forth to look for another house. Joe and Kit saw her go as if she were starting on an expedition into a strange country. In all their lives they had known no home save the little cottage in Oakley's yard. Here they had toddled as babies and played as children and been happy and care-free. There had been times when they had complained and wanted a home off by themselves like others whom they knew. But now all this was forgotten, and there was only grief and anxiety that they must leave the place and in such a way.

Fannie went out with little hope in her heart, and a short while after she was gone Joe decided to follow her and make a try for work.

"I'll go an' see what I kin do, anyway, Kit. 'Tain't much use, I reckon, trying to get into a bahbah-shop where they shave white folks, because all the white folks are down on us. I'll try one of the colored shops."

This was something of a condescension for Berry Hamilton's son. He had never yet shaved a black chin or put shears to what he termed "naps," and he was proud of it. He thought, though, that after the training he had received from the superior "tonsorial parlors" where he had been employed, he had but to ask for a place and he would be gladly accepted.

It is strange how all the foolish little vaunting things that a man says in days of prosperity wax a giant crop around him in the days of his adversity. Berry Hamilton's son found this out almost as soon as he had applied at the first of the colored shops for work.

"Oh, no, suh," said the proprietor, "I don't think we got anything fu' you to do; you're a white man's bahbah. We don't shave nothin' but niggahs hyeah, an' we shave 'em in de light o' day an' on de groun' flo'."

"W'y, I hyeah you say dat you couldn' git a paih of sheahs thoo a niggah's naps. You ain't been practisin' lately, has you?" came from the back of the shop, where a grinning negro was scraping a fellow's face.

"Oh, yes, you's done with burr-heads, is you? But burr-heads is good enough fu' you now."

"I think," the proprietor resumed, "that I hyeahed you say you wasn' fond o' grape-pickin'. Well, Josy, my son, I wouldn' begin it now, 'specially as anothah kin' o' pickin' seems to run in yo' famby."

Joe Hamilton never knew how he got out of that shop. He only knew that he found himself upon the street outside the door, tears of anger and shame in his eyes, and the laughs and taunts of his tormentors still ringing in his ears.

It was cruel, of course it was cruel. It was brutal. But only he knew how just it had been. In his moments of pride he had said all those things, half in fun and half in earnest, and he began to wonder how he could have been so many kinds of a fool for so long without realizing it.

He had not the heart to seek another shop, for he knew that what was known at one would be equally well known at all the rest. The hardest thing that he had to bear was the knowledge that he had shut himself out of all the chances that he now desired. He remembered with a pang the words of an old negro to whom he had once been impudent, "Nevah min', boy, nevah min', you's bo'n, but you ain't daid!"

It was too true. He had not known then what would come. He had never dreamed that anything so terrible could overtake him. Even in his straits, however, desperation gave him a certain pluck. He would try for something else for which his own tongue had not disqualified him. He went on to the Continental Hotel, where boys were almost always wanted to run the bells. The clerk looked him over critically. He was a bright, spruce-looking young fellow, and the man liked his looks.

"Well, I guess that we can take you on," he said. "What's your name?"

"Joe," was the laconic answer. He was afraid to say more.

"Well, Joe, you go over there and sit there where you see the other fellows in uniform, and wait until I call the head bellman."

Young Hamilton went over and sat down on a bench which ran along the hotel corridor and where the bellmen were wont to stay during the day awaiting their calls. A few of the blue-coated Mercuries were there. Upon Joe's advent they began to look askance at him and to talk among themselves. He felt his face burning as he thought of what they must be saying. Then he saw the head bellman talking to the clerk and looking in his direction. He saw him shake his head and walk away. He could have cursed him. The clerk called to him.

"I didn't know," he said,— "I didn't know that you were Berry

Hamilton's boy. Now, I've got nothing against you myself. I don't hold you responsible for what your father did, but I don't believe our boys would work with you. I can't take you on."

Joe turned away to meet the grinning or contemptuous glances of the bellmen on the seat. He hastened out of the hotel, feeling that every eye was upon him, every finger pointing at him, every tongue whispering, "There goes Joe Hamilton, whose father went to the penitentiary the other day."

What should he do? He could try no more. He was proscribed, and the letters of his ban were writ large throughout the town, where all who ran might read. For awhile he wandered aimlessly about, and then turned dejectedly homeward. His mother had not yet come.

"Did you get a job?" was Kit's first question.

"No," he answered bitterly, "no one wants me now."

"No one wants you? Why, Joe—they—they don't think hard of us, do they?"

"I don't know what they think of ma and you, but they think hard of me, all right."

"Oh, don't you worry; it'll be all right when it blows over."

"Yes, when it all blows over; but when'll that be?"

"Oh, after awhile, when we can show 'em we're all right."

Some of the girl's cheery hopefulness had come back to her in the presence of her brother's dejection, as a woman always forgets her own sorrow when someone she loves is grieving. But she could not communicate any of her feeling to Joe, who had been and seen and felt, and now sat darkly waiting his mother's return. Some presentiment seemed to tell him that, armed as she was with money to pay for what she wanted and asking for nothing without price, she would yet have no better tale to tell than he.

None of these forebodings visited the mind of Kit, and as soon as her mother appeared on the threshold she ran to her, crying, "Oh, where are we going to live, ma?"

Fannie looked at her for a moment, and then answered with a burst of tears, "Gawd knows, child, Gawd knows."

The girl stepped back astonished. "Why, why," and then with a rush of tenderness she threw her arms about her mother's neck. "Oh, you're tired to death," she said, "that's what's the matter with you. Never mind about the house now. I've got some tea made for you, and you just take a cup."

Fannie sat down and tried to drink her tea, but she could not. It stuck in her throat, and the tears rolled down her face and fell into the shaking cup. Joe looked on silently. He had been out and he understood.

"I'll go out to-morrow and do some looking around for a house while you stay at home an' rest, ma."

Her mother looked up, the maternal instinct for the protection of her daughter at once aroused. "Oh, no, not you, Kitty," she said.

Then for the first time Joe spoke: "You'd just as well tell Kitty now, ma, for she's got to come across it anyhow."

"What you know about it? Whaih you been to?"

"I've been out huntin' work. I've been to Jones's bahbah-shop an' to the Continental Hotel." His light-brown face turned brick-red with anger and shame at the memory of it. "I don't think I'll try any more."

Kitty was gazing with wide and saddening eyes at her mother.

"Were they mean to you, ma?" she asked breathlessly.

"Mean? Oh Kitty! Kitty! you don't know what it was like. It nigh killed me. Thaih was plenty of houses an' owned by people I've knowed fu' yeahs, but not one of 'em wanted to rent to me. Some of 'em made excuses 'bout one thing er t'other, but de res' come right straight out an' said dat we'd give a neighborhood a bad name ef we moved into it. I've almost tramped my laigs off. I've tried every decent place I could think of, but nobody wants us."

The girl was standing with her hands clinched nervously before her. It was almost more than she could understand.

"Why, we ain't done anythin'," she said. "Even if they don't know any better than to believe that pa was guilty, they know we ain't done anythin'."

"I'd like to cut the heart out of a few of 'em," said Joe in his throat.

"It ain't goin' to do no good to look at it that a-way, Joe," his mother replied. "I know hit's ha'd, but we got to do de bes' we kin."

"What are we goin' to do?" cried the boy fiercely. "They won't let us work. They won't let us live anywhaih. Do they want us to live on the levee an' steal, like some of 'em do?"

"What are we goin' to do?" echoed Kitty helplessly. "I'd go out ef I thought I could find anythin' to work at."

"Don't you go anywhaih, child. It'd only be worse. De niggah men dat uset to be bowin' an' scrapin' to me an' tekin' off dey hats to me laughed in my face. I met Minty—an' she slurred me right in de street. Dey'd do worse fu' you."

In the midst of the conversation a knock came at the door. It was a messenger from the "House," as they still called Oakley's home, and he wanted them to be out of the cottage by the next afternoon, as the new servants were coming and would want the rooms.

The message was so curt, so hard and decisive, that Fannie was startled out of her grief into immediate action.

"Well, we got to go," she said, rising wearily.

"But where are we goin'?" wailed Kitty in affright. "There's no place to go to. We haven't got a house. Where'll we go?"

"Out o' town some place as fur away from this damned hole as we kin git." The boy spoke recklessly in his anger. He had never sworn before his mother before.

She looked at him in horror. "Joe, Joe," she said, "you're mekin' it wuss. You're mekin' it ha'dah fu' me to baih when you talk dat a-way. What you mean? Whaih you think Gawd is?"

Joe remained sullenly silent. His mother's faith was too stalwart for his comprehension. There was nothing like it in his own soul to interpret it.

"We'll git de secon'-han' dealah to tek ouah things to-morrer, an' then we'll go away some place, up No'th, maybe."

"Let's go to New York," said Joe.

"New Yo'k?"

They had heard of New York as a place vague and far away, a city that, like Heaven, to them had existed by faith alone. All the days of their lives they had heard of it, and it seemed to them the centre of all the glory, all the wealth, and all the freedom of the world. New York. It had an alluring sound. Who would know them there? Who would look down upon them?

"It's a mighty long ways off fu' me to be sta'tin' at dis time o' life."

"We want to go a long ways off."

"I wonder what pa would think of it if he was here," put in Kitty.

"I guess he'd think we was doin' the best we could."

"Well, den, Joe," said his mother, her voice trembling with emotion at the daring step they were about to take, "you set down an' write a lettah to yo' pa, an' tell him what we goin' to do, an' to-morrer—to-morrer—we'll sta't."

Something akin to joy came into the boy's heart as he sat down to write the letter. They had taunted him, had they? They had scoffed at him. But he was going where they might never go, and some day he would come back holding his head high and pay them sneer for sneer and jibe for jibe.

From his window the next morning Maurice Oakley watched the wagon emptying the house. Then he saw Fannie come out and walk about her little garden, followed by her children. He saw her as she wiped her eyes and led the way to the side gate.

"Well, they're gone," he said to his wife. "I wonder where they're going to live."

"Oh, some of their people will take them in," replied Mrs. Oakley languidly.

VII.

IN NEW YORK.

To the provincial coming to New York for the first time, ignorant and unknown, the city presents a notable mingling of the qualities of cheeriness and gloom. If he have any eye at all for the beautiful, he cannot help experiencing a thrill as he crosses the ferry over the river filled with plying craft and catches the first sight of the spires and buildings of New York. If he have the right stuff in him, a something will take possession of him that will grip him again every time he returns to the scene and will make him long and hunger for the place when he is away from it. Later, the lights in the busy streets will bewilder and entice him. He will feel shy and helpless amid the hurrying crowds. A new emotion will take his heart as the people hasten by him, a feeling of loneliness, almost of grief, that with all of these souls about him he knows not one and not one of them cares for him. After awhile he will find a place and give a sigh of relief as he settles away from the city's sights behind his cosy blinds. It is better here, and the city is cruel and cold and unfeeling. This he will feel, perhaps, for the first half-hour, and then he will long to be out in it all again. He will be glad to strike elbows with the hustling mob and be happy at their indifference to him, so that he may look at them and study them. After it is all over, after he has passed through the first pangs of strangeness and homesickness, yes, even after he has got beyond the stranger's enthusiasm for the metropolis, the real fever of love for the place will begin to take hold upon him. The subtle, insidious wine of New York will begin to intoxicate him. Then, if he be wise, he will go away, any place,—yes, he will even go over to Jersey. But if he be a fool, he will stay and stay on until the town becomes all in all to him; until the very streets are his chums and certain buildings and corners his best friends. Then he is hopeless, and to live elsewhere would be death. The Bowery will be his romance, Broadway his lyric, and the park his pastoral; the river and the glory of it all his epic, and he will look down pityingly on all the rest of humanity.

Fannie was concerned about their future, but Joe and Kit thought chiefly about the new sights. At the station they looked about them for some colored face, and finally saw one among the porters who were handling the baggage. To Joe's inquiry he gave them an address, and also proffered his advice as to the best way to reach the place. He was exceedingly polite, and he looked hard at Kitty. They found the house to which they had been directed, and were a good deal surprised at its apparent grandeur. It was a four-storied brick dwelling on Twenty-seventh Street. As they looked from the outside, they were afraid that the price of staying in such a place would be too much for their pockets.

Inside, the sight of the hard, gaudily upholstered instalment-plan furniture did not disillusion them, and they continued to fear that they could never stop at this fine place. But they found Mrs. Jones, the proprietress, both gracious and willing to come to terms with them.

"Yes," she said, "I think I could arrange to take you. I could let you have two rooms, and you could use my kitchen until you decided whether you wanted to take a flat or not. I has the whole house myself, and I keeps roomers. But latah on I could fix things so's you could have the whole third floor ef you wanted to. Most o' my gent-men's railroad gent'men, they is. I guess it must 'a' been Mr. Thomas that sent you up here."

"He was a little bright man down at de deepo."

"Yes, that's him. That's Mr. Thomas."

It was a relief to the Hamiltons to find Mrs. Jones so gracious and homelike. So the matter was settled, and they took up their abode with her and sent for their baggage.

Mrs. Hamilton found it hard to be away from home, but she realized the advantage in being in a place where no one knew their history. Joe and Kit were differently affected by what they saw about them. The boy was wild with enthusiasm and with a desire to be a part of all that the metropolis meant. In the evening he saw the young fellows passing by dressed in their spruce clothes, and he wondered with a sort of envy where they could be going. Back home there had been no place much worth going to, except church and one or two people's houses. But these young fellows seemed to show by their manners that they were neither going to church nor family visiting. In the moment that he recognized this a revelation came to him—the knowledge that his horizon had been very narrow, and he felt angry that it was so. Why should those fellows be different from him? Why should they walk the streets so knowingly, so independently, when he knew not whither to turn his steps? Well, he was in New York, and now he would learn. Some day some greenhorn from the South should stand at a window and look out envying him as he passed, red-cravated, patent-leathered, intent on some goal. Was it not better, after all, that circumstances had forced them thither? Had it not been so they might all have stayed home and stagnated. Well, thought he, it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and somehow, with a guilty underthought, he forgot to feel the natural pity for his father, toiling guiltless in the prison of his native State.

"Whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad." The first sign of the demoralization of the provincial who comes to New York is his pride at the insensibility to certain impressions which used to influence him at home. First, he begins to scoff, and there is no truth in his views nor depth in his laugh. But by and by from mere pre-

tending it becomes real. He grows callous. After that he goes to the devil very cheerfully.

No such radical emotions, however, troubled Kit's mind. She too stood at the windows and looked down into the street. There was a sort of complacent calm in the manner in which she viewed the girls' hats and dresses. Many of them were really pretty, she told herself, but for the most part they were not better than what she had had down home. There was a sound quality in the girl's make-up that helped her to see through the glamour of mere place and recognize worth for itself. Or it may have been the critical faculty, which is prominent in most women, that kept her from thinking a five-cent cheese-cloth any better in New York than it was at home. She had a certain self-respect which made her value herself and her own traditions higher than her brother did his.

When, later in the evening, the porter who had been kind to them came in and was introduced as Mr. William Thomas, young as she was, she took his open admiration for her with more coolness than Joe exhibited when Thomas offered to show him something of the town some day or night.

Mr. Thomas was a loquacious little man with a confident air born of an intense admiration of himself. He was the idol of a number of servant-girls' hearts, and altogether a decidedly dashing back-area-way Don Juan.

"I tell you, Miss Kitty," he burst forth a few minutes after being introduced, "they ain't no use talkin', N'Yawk'll give you a shakin' up 'at you won't soon forget. It's the only town on the face of the earth. You kin bet your life they ain't no flies on N'Yawk. We git the best shows here, we get the best concerts—say, now, what's the use o' me callin' it all out,—we simply git the best of everything."

"Great place," said Joe wisely, in what he thought was going to be quite a man-of-the-world manner. But he burned with shame the next minute because his voice sounded so weak and youthful. Then too the oracle only said "Yes" to him, and went on expatiating to Kitty on the glories of the metropolis.

"D'jever see the statue o' Liberty? Great thing, the statue o' Liberty. I'll take you 'round some day. An' Cooney Island,—oh, my, now that's the place; and talk about fun! That's the place for me."

"La, Thomas," Mrs. Jones put in, "how you do run on. Why, the strangers'll think they'll be talked to death before they have time to breathe."

"Oh, I guess the folks understan' me. I'm one o' them kin' o' men 'at believe in whooping things up right from the beginning. I'm never strange with anybody. I'm a N'Yawker, I tell you, from the word go. I say, Mis' Jones, let's have some beer, an' we'll have some

music purty soon. There's a fellah in the house 'at plays rag-time out o' sight."

Mr. Thomas took the pail and went to the corner. As he left the room Mrs. Jones slapped her knee and laughed until her bust shook like jelly.

"Mr. Thomas is a case, sho'," she said; "but he likes you all, an' I'm mighty glad of it, fu' he's mighty curious about the house when he don't like the roomers."

Joe felt distinctly flattered, for he found their new acquaintance charming. His mother was still a little doubtful, and Kitty was sure she found the young man fresh.

He came in pretty soon with his beer and a half-dozen crabs in a bag.

"Thought I'd bring home something to chew. I always like to eat something with my beer."

Mrs. Jones brought in the glasses, and the young man filled one and turned to Kitty.

"No, thanks," she said, with a surprised look.

"What, don't you drink beer? Oh, come, now, you'll get out o' that."

"Kitty don't drink no beer," broke in her mother with mild resentment. "I drinks it sometimes, but she don't. I reckon maybe de chillen better go to bed."

Joe felt as if the "chillen" had ruined all his hopes, but Kitty rose.

The ingratiating "N'Yawker" was aghast.

"Oh, let 'em stay," said Mrs. Jones heartily; "a little beer ain't goin' to hurt 'em. Why, sakes, I know my father gave me beer from the time I could drink it, and I knows I ain't none the worse fu' it."

"They'll git out o' that, all right, if they live in N'Yawk," said Mr. Thomas as he poured out a glass and handed it to Joe. "You neither?"

"Oh, I drink it," said the boy with an air, but not looking at his mother.

"Joe," she cried to him, "you must ricollect you ain't at home. What 'ud yo' pa think——" Then she stopped suddenly and Joe gulped his beer and Kitty went to the piano to relieve her embarrassment.

"Yes, that's it, Miss Kitty, sing us something," said the irrepressible Thomas, "an' after while we'll have that fellah down that plays rag-time. He's out o' sight, I tell you."

With the pretty shyness of girlhood, Kitty sang one or two little songs in the simple manner she knew. Her voice was full and rich. It delighted Mr. Thomas.

"I say, that's singin', now, I tell you," he cried. "You ought to

have some o' the new songs. D'jever hear 'Baby, you got to leave'? I tell you, that's a hot one. I'll bring you some of 'em. Why, you could git a job on the stage easy with that voice o' yourn. I got a frien' in one o' the comp'nies, an' I'll speak to him about you."

"You ought to git Mr. Thomas to take you to the th'atre some night. He goes lots."

"Why, yes, what's the matter with to-morrer night? There's a good coon show in town. Out o' sight! Let's all go."

"I ain't nevah been to nothin' lak dat, an' I don't know," said Mrs. Hamilton.

"Aw, come; I'll git the tickets an' we'll all go. Great singin', you know. Wha' d' you say?"

The mother hesitated and Joe filled the breach.

"We'd all like to go," he said. "Ma, we'll go if you ain't too tired."

"Tired? Pshaw! you'll furgit all about your tiredness when Smithkins gits on the stage. Y'ought to hear him sing 'I bin huntin' fu' wo'k! You'd die laughing."

Mrs. Hamilton made no further demur, and the matter was closed.

A while later the rag-time man came down and gave them a sample of what they were to hear the next night. Mr. Thomas and Mrs. Jones two-stepped, and they sent a boy after some more beer. Joe found it a very jolly evening, but Kit's and the mother's hearts were heavy as they went up to bed.

"Say," said Mr. Thomas when they had gone, "that little girl's a peach, you bet; a little green, I guess, but she'll ripen in the sun."

VIII.

AN EVENING OUT.

FANNIE HAMILTON was in a state of doubt, both as to her ultimate liking for New York and the feeling she experienced towards their new acquaintance, the porter. But she could not lay her finger on any particular point that would give her the reason for rejecting his friendly advances. She got ready the next evening to go to the theatre with the rest. Mr. Thomas at once possessed himself of Kitty and walked on ahead, leaving Joe to accompany his mother and Mrs. Jones, an arrangement, by the way, not altogether to that young gentleman's taste. A good many men bowed to Thomas in the street, and then turned to look enviously after him. At the door of the theatre they had to run the gauntlet of a dozen pairs of eyes.

They had good seats in the first balcony, and here their guide had shown his managerial ability again, for he had found it impossible, or said so, to get all the seats together, so that he and the girl were in the row in front and to one side of where the rest sat. Kitty did not like

the arrangement, and innocently suggested that her brother take her seat while she went back to her mother. But her escort overruled her objections easily and laughed at her so frankly that from very shame she could not urge them again, and they were soon forgotten in her wonder at the mystery and glamour that envelop the home of the drama. There was something weird to her in the alternate spaces of light and shade. Without any feeling of its ugliness, she looked at the curtain as at a door that should presently open between her and a house of wonders. She looked at it with the fascination that one always experiences for what either brings near or withholds the unknown.

As for Joe, he was not bothered by the mystery or the glamour of things. But he had suddenly raised himself in his own estimation. He had gazed steadily at a girl across the aisle until she had smiled in response. Of course, he went hot and cold by turns and the sweat broke out on his brow, but instantly he began to swell. He had made a decided advance in knowledge, and he swelled with the consciousness that already he was coming to be a man of the world. He looked with a new feeling at the swaggering, sporty young Negroes. His attitude towards them was not one of humble self-depreciation any more. Since last night he had grown, and felt that he might—that he would—be like them, and it put a sort of chuckling glee into his heart.

One might find it in him to feel sorry for this small-souled, warped being, for he was so evidently the jest of Fate, if it were not that he was so blissfully, so conceitedly, unconscious of his own nastiness. Down home he had shaved the wild young bucks of the town, and while doing it drunk in eagerly their unguarded narrations of their gay exploits. So he had started out with false ideals as to what was fine and manly. He was afflicted by a sort of moral and mental astigmatism that made him see everything wrong. As he sat there to-night, he gave to all he saw a wrong value and upon it based his ignorant desires.

When the men of the orchestra filed in and began tuning their instruments, it was the signal for an influx of loiterers from the door. Finally the music struck up one of the many Negro marches. It was accompanied by the rhythmic patting of feet from all parts of the house. Then the curtain went up on a scene of beauty. It purported to be a grove to which a party of picnickers, the "ladies and gentlemen of the chorus," had come for a holiday, and they were telling the audience all about it in crescendos. With the exception of one, who looked like a faded kid glove, the men, one and all, discarded the grease-paint, but the women under their make-ups ranged from pure white, pale yellow, and sickly greens to brick reds and slate grays. They were dressed in costumes that were not primarily intended for picnic-going. But they could sing, and they did sing, with their voices, their bodies,

their souls. They threw themselves into it because they enjoyed and felt what they were doing, and they gave almost a semblance of dignity to the tawdry music and inane words.

Kitty was enchanted. The airily dressed women seemed to her like creatures from fairyland. It is strange how the glare of the footlights succeeds in deceiving so many people who are able to see through other delusions. The cheap dresses on the street had not fooled Kitty for an instant, but take the same cheese-cloth, put a little water-starch into it, and put it on the stage, and she could only see chiffon.

She turned around and nodded delightedly at her brother, but he did not see her. He was lost, transfixed. His soul was floating on a sea of sense. He had eyes and ears and thoughts only for the stage. His nerves tingled and his hands twitched. Only to know one of those radiant creatures, to have her speak to him, smile at him! If ever a man were intoxicated, Joe was. Mrs. Hamilton was divided between shame at the clothes of some of the women and delight with the music. Her companion was busy pointing out who this and that actress was and giving jelly-like appreciation to the doings on the stage.

Mr. Thomas was the only cool one in the party. He was quietly taking stock of his young companion—of her innocence and charm. She was a pretty girl, little and dainty, but well developed for her age. Her hair was very black and wavy, and some strain of the South's chivalric blood, which is so curiously mingled with the African in the veins of most colored people, had tinged her skin to an olive hue.

"Are you enjoying yourself?" he leaned over and whispered to her. His voice was very confidential and his lips near her ear, but she did not notice.

"Oh, yes," she answered, "this is grand. How I'd like to be an actress and be up there!"

"Maybe you will some day."

"Oh, no; I'm not smart enough."

"We'll see," he said wisely; "I know a thing or two."

Between the first and second acts a number of Thomas's friends strolled up to where he sat and began talking, and again Kitty's embarrassment took possession of her as they were introduced one by one. They treated her with a half-courteous familiarity that made her blush. Her mother was not pleased with the many acquaintances that her daughter was making, and would have interfered had not Mrs. Jones assured her that the men clustered about their host's seat were some of the "the best people in town." Joe looked at them hungrily, but the man in front with his sister did not think it necessary to include the brother or the rest of the party in his miscellaneous introductions.

One brief bit of conversation which the mother overheard especially troubled her.

"Not going out for a minute or two?" asked one of the men as he was turning away from Thomas.

"No, I don't think that I'll go out to-night. You can have my share."

The fellow gave a horse-laugh and replied, "Well, you're doing a great piece of work, Miss Hamilton, whenever you can keep old Bill from goin' out an' lushin' between acts. Say, you got a good thing; push it along."

The girl's mother half rose, but she resumed her seat, for the man was going away. Her mind was not quiet again, however, until the people were all in their seats and the curtain had gone up on the second act. At first she was surprised at the enthusiasm over just such dancing as she could see any day from the loafers on the street-corners down home, and then, like a good, sensible, humble woman, she came around to the idea that it was she who had always been wrong in putting too low a value on really worthy things. So she laughed and applauded with the rest, all the while trying to quiet something that was tugging at her way down in her heart.

When the performance was over she forced her way to Kitty's side, where she remained in spite of all Thomas's palpable efforts to get her away. Finally he proposed that they all go to supper at one of the colored cafés.

"You'll see a lot o' the show people," he said.

"No, I reckon we'd bettah go home," said Mrs. Hamilton decidedly. "De chillen ain't used to stayin' up all hours o' night, an' I ain't anxious fu' 'em to git uset to it."

She was conscious of a growing dislike for this man who treated her daughter with such a proprietary air. Joe winced again at "de chillen."

Thomas bit his lip and mentally said things that are unfit for publication. Aloud he said, "Mebbe Miss Kitty 'ud like to go an' have a little lunch."

"Oh, no, thank you," said the girl; "I've had a nice time and I don't care for a thing to eat."

Joe told himself that Kitty was the biggest fool that it had ever been his lot to meet, and the disappointed suitor satisfied himself with the reflection that the girl was green yet, but would get bravely over that.

He attempted to hold her hand as they parted at the parlor door, but she drew her fingers out of his clasp and said "Good-night; thank you," as if he had been one of her mother's old friends.

Joe lingered a little longer.

"Say, that was out o' sight," he said.

"Think so?" asked the other carelessly.

"I'd like to get out with you some time to see the town," the boy went on eagerly.

"All right, we'll go some time. So long."

"So long."

Some time. Was it true? Would he really take him out and let him meet stage people? Joe went to bed with his head in a whirl. He slept little that night for thinking of his heart's desire.

IX.

HIS HEART'S DESIRE.

WHATEVER else his visit to the theatre may have done for Joe, it inspired him with a desire to go to work and earn money of his own, to be independent both of parental help and control, and so be able to spend as he pleased. With this end in view he set out to hunt for work. It was a pleasant contrast to his last similar quest, and he felt it with joy. He was treated everywhere he went with courtesy, even when no situation was forthcoming. Finally he came upon a man who was willing to try him for an afternoon. From the moment the boy rightly considered himself engaged, for he was master of his trade. He began his work with heart elate. Now he had within his grasp the possibility of being all that he wanted to be. Now Thomas might take him out at any time and not be ashamed of him.

With Thomas the fact that Joe was working put the boy in an entirely new light. He decided that now he might be worth cultivating. For a week or two he had ignored him, and, proceeding upon the principle that if you give corn to the old hen she will cluck to her chicks, had treated Mrs. Hamilton with marked deference and kindness. This had been without success, as both the girl and her mother had held themselves politely aloof from him. He began to see that his hope of winning Kitty's affections lay not in courting the older woman, but in making a friend of the boy. So on a certain Saturday night, when the Banner Club was to give one of its smokers, he asked Joe to go with him. Joe was glad to, and they set out together. Arrived, Thomas left his companion for a few moments while he attended, as he said, to a little business. What he really did was to seek out the proprietor of the club and some of its hangers-on.

"I say," he said, "I've got a friend with me to-night. He's got some dough on him. He's fresh and young and easy."

"Whew!" exclaimed the proprietor.

"Yes, he's a good thing, but push it along kin' o' light at first; he might get skittish."

"Thomas, let me fall on your bosom and weep," said a young man who, on account of his usual expression of innocent gloom, was called Sadness. "This is what I've been looking for for a month. My hat

is getting decidedly shabby. Do you think he would stand for a touch on the first sight of an acquaintance?"

"Don't you dare! Do you want to frighten him off? Make him believe that you've got coin to burn and that it's an honor to be with you."

"But, you know, he may expect a glimpse of the gold."

"A smart man don't need to show nothin'. All he's got to do is to act."

"Oh, I'll act; we'll all act."

"Be slow to take a drink from him."

"Thomas, my boy, you're an angel, I recognize that more and more every day, but bid me do anything else but that. That I refuse: it's against nature," and Sadness looked more mournful than ever.

"Trust old Sadness to do his part," said the portly proprietor, and Thomas went back to the lamb.

"Nothin' doin' so early," he said; "let's go an' have a drink."

They went, and Thomas ordered.

"No, no, this is on me," cried Joe, trembling with joy.

"Pshaw! your money is counterfeit," said his companion with fine generosity. "This is on me, I say. Jack, what'll you have yourself?"

As they stood at the bar the men began strolling up one by one. Each in his turn was introduced to Joe. They were very polite. They treated him with a pale, dignified, high-minded respect that menaced his pocket-book and possessions. The proprietor, Mr. Turner, wondered why he had never been in before. He really seemed much hurt about it, and on being told that Joe had only been in the city for a couple of weeks expressed emphatic surprise, even disbelief, and assured the rest that anyone would have taken Mr. Hamilton for an old New Yorker.

Sadness was introduced last. He bowed to Joe's "Happy to know you, Mr. Williams."

"Better known as Sadness," he said, with an expression of deep gloom. "A distant relative of mine once had a great grief. I have never recovered from it."

Joe was not quite sure how to take this, but the others laughed and he joined them, and then, to cover his own embarrassment, he did what he thought the only correct and manly thing to do,—he ordered a drink.

"I don't know as I ought to," said Sadness.

"Oh, come on," his companions called out; "don't be stiff with a stranger. Make him feel at home."

"Mr. Hamilton will believe me when I say that I have no intention of being stiff, but duty is duty. I've got to go down town to pay a bill, and if I get too much aboard it wouldn't be safe walking around with money on me."

"Aw, shut up, Sadness," said Thomas. "My friend, Mr. Hamilton, 'll feel hurt if you don't drink with him."

"I cert'ny will," was Joe's opportune remark, and he was pleased to see that it caused the reluctant one to yield.

They took a drink. There was quite a line of them. Joe asked the bartender what he would have. The men warmed towards him. They took several more drinks with him and he was happy. Sadness put his arm about his shoulder and told him, with tears in his eyes, that he looked like a cousin of his that had died.

"Aw, shut up, Sadness," said someone else. "Be respectable."

Sadness turned his mournful eyes upon the speaker. "I won't," he replied. "Being respectable is very nice as a diversion, but it's tedious if done steadily." Joe did not quite take this, so he ordered another drink.

A group of young fellows came in and passed up the stairs. "Shearing another lamb," said one of them significantly.

"Well, with that gang it will be well done."

Thomas and Joe left the crowd after awhile and went to the upper floor, where, in a long, brilliantly lighted room, tables were set out for drinking-parties. At one end of the room was a piano, and a man sat at it listlessly strumming some popular air. The proprietor joined them pretty soon and steered them to a table opposite the door.

"Just sit down here, Mr. Hamilton," he said, "and you can see everybody that comes in. We have lots of nice people here on smoker nights, especially after the shows are out and the girls come in."

Joe's heart gave a great leap, and then settled as cold as lead. Of course, those girls wouldn't speak to him. But his hopes rose as the proprietor went on talking to him and to no one else. Mr. Turner always made a man feel as if he were of some consequence in the world, and men a good deal older than Joe had been fooled by his manner. He talked to one in a soft, ingratiating way, giving his whole attention, apparently. He tapped one confidentially on the shoulder, as who should say, "My dear boy, I have but two friends in the world, and you are both of them."

Joe, charmed and pleased, kept his head well. There is a great deal in heredity, and his father had not been Maurice Oakley's butler for so many years for nothing. His son had inherited a strong head.

The Banner Club was an institution for the lower education of Negro youth. It drew its pupils from every class of people and from every part of the country. It was composed of all sorts and conditions of men, educated and uneducated, dishonest and less so; of the good, the bad, and the unexposed. Parasites came there to find victims, politicians for votes, reporters for news, and artists of all kinds for color and inspiration.

The Banner was only one of a kind. It stood to the stranger and the man and woman without connections for their whole social life. It was a substitute, poor, it must be confessed, to many youths for the home life, which is so lacking among certain classes in New York.

Here the rounders congregated, or came and spent the hours until it was time to go forth to work or amusement. Here too came sometimes the curious who wanted to see something of the other side of life. Among these, white visitors were not infrequent,—those who were young enough to be fascinated by the bizarre, and those who were old enough to know that it was all in the game. Mr. Skaggs, of the *New York Universe*, was one of the former class and a constant visitor.

It was into this atmosphere that Thomas had introduced the boy Joe, and he sat there now by his side, firing his mind by pointing out the different celebrities who came in and telling highly flavored stories of their lives or doings. Joe heard things that had never come within the range of his knowledge before.

"Aw, there's Skaggsy an' Maudie—Maudie's his girl, y'know, an' he's a reporter on the *N'Yawk Universe*. Fine fellow, Skaggsy."

Maudie, a portly, voluptuous-looking brunette, left her escort and went directly to the space by the piano. Here she was soon dancing with one of the colored girls who had come in.

Skaggs started to sit down alone at a table, but Thomas called him, "Come over here, Skaggsy."

In the moment that it took the young man to reach them Joe wondered if he would ever reach that state when he could call that white man Skaggsy and the girl Maudie. The new-comer soon set all of that at ease.

"I want you to know my friend, Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Skaggsy."

"Why, how d'ye do, Hamilton? I'm glad to meet you. Now, look a-here; don't you let old Thomas here string you about me bein' any old 'Mr.' Skaggs. I'm Skaggsy to all of my friends. I hope to count you among them."

It was such a supreme moment that Joe could not find words to answer, so he called for another drink.

"Not a bit of it," said Skaggsy, "not a bit of it. When I meet my friends I always reserve to myself the right of ordering the first drink. Waiter, this is on me. What'll you have, gentlemen?"

They got their drinks, and then Skaggsy leaned over confidentially and began talking.

"I tell you, Hamilton, there ain't an ounce of prejudice in my body. Do you believe it?" Joe said that he did. Indeed, Skaggsy struck one as being aggressively unprejudiced.

He went on: "You see, a lot o' fellows say to me, 'What do you want to go down to that nigger club for?' That's what they call it,

'nigger club.' But I say to 'em, 'Gentlemen, at that nigger club, as you choose to call it, I get more inspiration than I could get at any of the greater clubs in New York.' I've often been invited to join some of the swell clubs here, but I never do it. By Jove! I'd rather come down here and fellowship right in with you fellows. I like colored people, anyway. It's natural. You see, my father had a big plantation and owned lots of slaves,—no offence, of course, but it was the custom of that time,—and I've played with little darkies ever since I could remember."

It was the same old story that the white who associates with Negroes from volition usually tells to explain his taste.

The truth about the young reporter was that he was born and reared on a Vermont farm, where his early life was passed in fighting for his very subsistence. But this never troubled Skaggsy. He was a monumental liar. The boys who knew him best used to say that when Skaggs got started on one of his debauches of lying the Recording Angel always put on an extra clerical force.

"Now look at Maudie," he went on. "Would you believe it that she was of a fine, rich family, and that the colored girl she's dancing with now used to be her servant? She's just like me about that,—absolutely no prejudice."

Joe was wide-eyed with wonder and admiration, and he couldn't understand the amused expression on Thomas's face, nor why he surreptitiously kicked him under the table.

Finally the reporter went his way, and Joe's sponsor explained to him that he was not to take in what Skaggsy said, and that there hadn't been a word of truth in it. He ended with "Everybody knows Maudie, and that colored girl is Mamie Lacey, and never worked for anybody in her life. Skaggsy's a good fellow, all right, but he's the biggest liar in N'Yawk."

The boy was distinctly shocked. He wasn't sure but that Thomas was jealous of the attention the white man had shown him and wished to belittle it. Anyway, he did not thank him for destroying his romance.

About eleven o'clock, when the people began to drop in from the plays, the master of ceremonies opened proceedings by saying that "The free concert would now begin, and he hoped that all present, ladies included, would act like gentlemen, and not forget the waiter. Mr. Meriweather will now favor us with the latest coon song, entitled 'Come back to Yo' Baby, Honey.'" There was a patter of applause, and a young Negro came forward, and in a strident, music-hall voice sang, or rather recited, with many gestures the ditty. He couldn't have been much older than Joe, but already his face was hard with dissipation. He was followed by a little, brown-skinned fellow with an immature Vandyke beard and a lisp. He sang his own composition

and was funny; how much funnier than he himself knew or intended may not even be hinted at. Then, while an instrumentalist, who seemed to have a grudge against the piano, was hammering out the opening bars of a march, Joe's attention was attracted by a woman entering the room, and from that moment he heard no more of the concert.

She was a small girl, with fluffy dark hair and good features. A tiny foot peeped out from beneath her rattling silk skirts. She was a good-looking young woman and daintily made, though her face was no longer youthful, and one might have wished that with her complexion she had not run to silk waists in magenta.

Joe, however, saw no fault in her. She was altogether lovely to him, and his delight was the more poignant as he recognized in her one of the girls he had seen on the stage a couple of weeks ago. That being true, nothing could keep her from being glorious in his eyes, not even the grease-paint which adhered in unneat patches to her face, nor her taste for whiskey in its unreformed state. He gazed at her in ecstacy until Thomas, turning to see what had attracted him, said with a laugh, "Oh, it's Hattie Sterling. Want to meet her?"

Again the young fellow was dumb. Just then Hattie also noticed his intent look, and nodded and beckoned to Thomas.

"Come on," he said, rising.

"Oh, she didn't ask for me," cried Joe, tremulous and eager.

His companion went away laughing.

"Who's your young friend?" asked Hattie.

"A fellah from the South."

"Bring him over here."

Joe could hardly believe in his own good luck, and his head, which was getting a bit weak now, was near collapsing when his divinity asked him what he'd have. He began to protest, until she told the waiter with an air of authority to make it a little "Skey." Then she asked him for a cigarette, and began talking to him in a pleasant, soothing way between puffs.

When the drinks came she said to Thomas, "Now, old man, you've been awfully nice, but when you get your little drink, you run away like a good little boy. You're superfluous."

Thomas answered, "Well, I like that," but obediently gulped his whiskey and withdrew, while Joe laughed until the master of ceremonies stood up and looked sternly at him.

The concert had long been over and the room was less crowded when Thomas sauntered back to the pair.

"Well, good-night," he said. "Guess you can find your way home, Mr. Hamilton," and he gave Joe a long wink.

"Goo'-night," said Joe woozily. "I be a' ri'. Goo'-night."

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It was late the next morning when Joe got home. He had a headache and a sense of triumph that not even his illness and his mother's reproof could subdue.

He had promised Hattie to come often to the club.

X.

A VISITOR FROM HOME.

MRS. HAMILTON began to question very seriously whether she had done the best thing in coming to New York as she saw her son staying away more and more and growing always farther away from her and his sister. Had she known how and where he spent his evenings she would have had even greater cause to question the wisdom of their trip. She knew that although he worked he never had any money for the house, and she foresaw the time when the little they had would no longer suffice for Kitty and her. Realizing this, she herself set out to find something to do.

It was a hard matter, for wherever she went seeking employment, it was always for her and her daughter, for the more she saw of Mrs. Jones, the less she thought it well to leave the girl under her influence. Mrs. Hamilton was not a keen woman, but she had a mother's intuitions, and she saw a subtle change in her daughter. At first the girl had grown wistful, and then impatient and rebellious. She complained that Joe was away from them so much enjoying himself, while she had to be housed up like a prisoner. She had receded from her dignified position, and twice of an evening had gone out for a car-ride with Thomas; but as that gentleman never included the mother in his invitation, the latter decided that her daughter should go no more, and she begged Joe to take his sister out sometimes instead. He demurred at first, for he now numbered among his city acquirements a fine contempt for his women relatives. Finally, however, he consented, and took Kit once to the theatre and once for a ride. Each time he left her in the care of Thomas as soon as they were out of the house, while he went to find or to wait for his dear Hattie. But his mother did not know all this and Kit did not tell her. The quick poison of the unreal life about her had already begun to affect her character. She had grown secretive and sly. The innocent longing which in a burst of enthusiasm she had expressed that first night at the theatre was growing into a real ambition with her, and she dropped the simple old songs she knew to practise the detestable coon ditties which the stage demanded.

She showed no particular pleasure when her mother found the sort of place they wanted, but went to her work with her in sullen silence. Mrs. Hamilton could not understand it all, and many a night she wept and prayed over the change in this child of her heart. There were

times when she felt that there was nothing left to work or fight for. The letters from Berry in prison became fewer and fewer. He was sinking into the dull, dead routine of his life. Her own letters to him fell off. It was hard getting the children to write. They did not want to be bothered, and she could not write for herself. So in the weeks and months that followed she drifted farther away from her children and husband and all the traditions of her life.

After Joe's first night at the Banner Club he had kept his promise to Hattie Sterling and had gone often to meet her. She had taught him much, because it was to her advantage to do so. His greenness had dropped from him like a garment, but no amount of sophistication could make him deem the woman less perfect. He knew that she was much older than he, but he only took this fact as an additional sign of his prowess in having won her. He was proud of himself when he went behind the scenes at the theatre or waited for her at the stage door and bore her off under the admiring eyes of a crowd of gapers. And Hattie? She liked him in a half-contemptuous, half-amused way. He was a good-looking boy and made money enough, as she expressed it, to show her a good time, so she was willing to overlook his weakness and his callow vanity.

"Look here," she said to him one day, "I guess you'll have to be moving. There's a young lady been inquiring for you to-day, and I won't stand for that."

He looked at her, startled for a moment, until he saw the laughter in her eyes. Then he caught her and kissed her. "What're you givin' me?" he said.

"It's a straight tip, that's what."

"Who is it?"

"It's a girl named Minty Brown, from your home."

His face turned brick red with fear and shame. "Minty Brown!" he stammered.

Had this girl told all and undone him? But Hattie was going on about her work and evidently knew nothing.

"Oh, you needn't pretend you don't know her," she went on banteringly. "She says you were great friends down South, so I've invited her to supper. She wants to see you."

"To supper!" he thought. Was she mocking him? Was she restraining her scorn of him only to make his humiliation the greater after awhile? He looked at her, but there was no suspicion of malice in her face, and he took hope.

"Well, I'd like to see old Minty," he said. "It's been many a long day since I've seen her."

All that afternoon, after going to the barber-shop, Joe was driven by a tempest of conflicting emotions. If Minty Brown had not told

his story, why not? Would she yet tell, and if she did, what would happen? He tortured himself by questioning if Hattie would cast him off. At the very thought his hand trembled, and the man in the chair asked him if he hadn't been drinking.

When he met Minty in the evening, however, the first glance at her reassured him. Her face was wreathed in smiles as she came forward and held out her hand.

"Well, well, Joe Hamilton," she exclaimed, "if I ain't right-down glad to see you! How are you?"

"I'm middlin', Minty. How's yourself?" He was so happy that he couldn't let go her hand.

"An' jes' look at the boy! Ef he ain't got the impidence to be waihin' a mustache too. You must 'a' been lettin' the cats lick yo' upper lip. Didn't expect to see me in New York, did you?"

"No, indeed. What you doin' here?"

"Oh, I got a gent'man friend what's a porter, an' his run's been changed so that he comes hyeah, an' he told me, if I wanted to come, he'd bring me thoo fu' a visit; so, you see, hyeah I am. I allus was mighty anxious to see this hyeah town. But tell me, how's Kit an' yo' ma?"

"They're both right well." He had forgotten them and their scorn of Minty.

"Whaih do you live? I'm comin' roun' to see 'em."

He hesitated for a moment. He knew how his mother, if not Kit, would receive her, and yet he dared not anger this woman, who had his fate in the hollow of her hand.

She saw his hesitation and spoke up. "Oh, that's all right. Let by-gones be by-gones. You know I ain't the kin' o' person that holds a grudge ag'in' anybody."

"That's right, Minty, that's right," he said, and gave her his mother's address. Then he hastened home to prepare the way for Minty's coming. Joe had no doubt but that his mother would see the matter quite as he saw it, and be willing to temporize with Minty; but he had reckoned without his host. Mrs. Hamilton might make certain concessions to strangers on the score of expediency, but she absolutely refused to yield one iota of her dignity to one whom she had known so long as an inferior.

"But don't you see what she can do for us, ma? She knows people that I know, and she can ruin me with them."

"I ain't nevah bowed my haid to Minty Brown, an' I ain't a-goin' to do it now," was his mother's only reply.

"Oh, ma," Kitty put in, "you don't want to get talked about up here, do you?"

"We'd jes' as well be talked about fu' some'p'n we didn't do as fu'

somep'n we did do, an' it wouldn' be long befo' we'd come to dat if we made frien's wid dat Brown gal. I ain't a-goin' to do it. I'm ashamed o' you, Kitty, fu' wantin' me to."

The girl began to cry, while her brother walked the floor angrily.

"You'll see what'll happen," he cried; "you'll see."

Fannie looked at her son, and she seemed to see him more clearly than she had ever seen him before—his foppery, his meanness, his cowardice.

"Well," she answered with a sigh, "it can't be no wuss dan what's already happened."

"You'll see; you'll see," the boy reiterated.

Minty Brown allowed no wind of thought to cool the fire of her determination. She left Hattie Sterling's soon after Joe, and he was still walking the floor and uttering dire forebodings when she rang the bell below and asked for the Hamiltons.

Mrs. Jones ushered her into her fearfully upholstered parlor, and then puffed upstairs to tell her lodgers that there was a friend there from the South who wanted to see them.

"Tell huh," said Mrs. Hamilton, "dat dey ain't no one hyeah wants to see huh."

"No, no," Kitty broke in.

"Heish!" said her mother; "I'm goin' to boss you a little while yit."

"Why, I don't understan' you, Mis' Hamilton," puffed Mrs. Jones. "She's a nice-lookin' lady, an' she said she knowed you at home."

"All you got to do is to tell dat ooman jes' what I say."

Minty Brown downstairs had heard the little colloquy, and, perceiving that something was amiss, had come to the stairs to listen. Now her voice, striving hard to be condescending and sweet, but growing harsh with anger, floated up from below:

"Oh, nevah min', lady, I ain't anxious to see 'em. I jest called out o' pity, but I reckon dey 'shamed to see me 'cause de ol' man's in penitentiary an' dey was run out o' town."

Mrs. Jones gasped, and then turned and went hastily downstairs.

Kit burst out crying afresh, and Joe walked the floor muttering beneath his breath, while the mother sat grimly watching the outcome. Finally they heard Mrs. Jones's step once more on the stairs. She came in without knocking, and her manner was distinctly unpleasant.

"Mis' Hamilton," she said, "I've had a talk with the lady downstairs, an' she's tol' me everything. I'd be glad if you'd let me have my rooms as soon as possible."

"So you goin' to put me out on de wo'd of a stranger?"

"I'm kin' o' sorry, but everybody in the house heard what Miss

Brown said, an' it'll soon be all over town, an' that 'ud ruin the reputation of my house."

"I reckon all dat kin be 'splained."

"Yes, but I don't know that anybody kin 'splain your daughter allus bein' with Mr. Thomas, who ain't even divo'ced from his wife." She flashed a vindictive glance at the girl, who turned deadlly pale and dropped her head in her hands.

"You daih to say dat, Mis' Jones, you dat fust interduced my gal to dat man and got huh to go out wid him? I reckon you'd bettah go now."

And Mrs. Jones looked at Fannie's face and obeyed.

As soon as the woman's back was turned Joe burst out, "There, there! see what you've done with your damned foolishness."

Fannie turned on him like a tigress. "Don't you cuss hyeah befo' me; I ain't nevah brung you up to it, an' I won't stan' it. Go to dem whaih you l'arned it, an' whaih de wo'ds soun' sweet." The boy started to speak, but she checked him. "Don't you daih to cuss ag'in, or befo' Gawd dey'll be somep'n' fu' one o' dis fambly to be rottin' in jail fu'!"

The boy was cowed by his mother's manner. He was gathering his few belongings in a bundle.

"I ain't goin' to cuss," he said sullenly, "I'm goin' out o' your way."

"Oh, go on," she said, "go on. It's been a long time sence you been my son. You on yo' way to hell, an' you is been fu' lo dese many days."

Joe got out of the house as soon as possible. He did not speak to Kit nor look at his mother. He felt like a cur, because he knew deep down in his heart that he had only been waiting for some excuse to take this step.

As he slammed the door behind him his mother flung herself down by Kit's side and mingled her tears with her daughter's. But Kit did not raise her head.

"Dey ain't nothin' lef' but you now, Kit," but the girl did not speak, she only shook with hard sobs.

Then her mother raised her head and almost screamed, "My Gawd, not you, Kit!" The girl rose and then dropped unconscious in her mother's arms.

XI.

BROKEN HOPES.

JOE went away from his mother's house feeling himself somehow aggrieved, and the feeling grew upon him the more he thought of it. His mother had ruined his chance in life, and he could never hold up his head again. Yes, he had heard that several of the fellows at the

club had shady reputations, but surely to be the son of a thief or a supposed thief was not like being the criminal himself.

At the Banner he took a seat by himself, and, ordering a cocktail, sat glowering at the few other lonely members who had happened to drop in. There were not many of them, and the contagion of unsociability had taken possession of the house. The people sat scattered around at different tables, perfectly unmindful of the bartender, who cursed them under his breath for not getting together.

Joe's mind was filled with bitter thoughts. How long had he been away from home? he asked himself. Nearly a year. Nearly a year passed in New York, and he had come to be what he so much desired—a part of its fast life—and now in a moment an old woman's stubbornness had destroyed all that he had builded.

What would Thomas say when he heard it? What would the other fellows think? And Hattie? It was plain that she would never notice him again. He had no doubt but that the malice of Minty Brown would prompt her to seek out all of his friends and make the story known. Why had he not tried to placate her by disavowing sympathy with his mother? He would have had no compunction about doing so, but he had thought of it too late. He sat brooding over his trouble until the bartender called with respectful sarcasm to ask if he wanted to lease the glass he had.

He gave back a silly laugh, gulped the rest of the liquor down, and was ordering another when Sadness came in. He came up directly to Joe and sat down beside him. "Mr. Hamilton says 'Make it *two*, Jack,'" he said with easy familiarity. "Well, what's the matter, old man? You're looking glum."

"I feel glum."

"The divine Hattie hasn't been cutting capers, has she? The dear old girl hasn't been getting hysterical at her age? Let us hope not."

Joe glared at him. Why in the devil should this fellow be so sadly gay when he was weighted down with sorrow and shame and disgust?

"Come, come, now, Hamilton, if you're sore because I invited myself to take a drink with you, I'll withdraw the order. I know the heroic thing to say is that I'll pay for the drinks myself, but I can't screw my courage up to the point of doing so unnatural a thing."

Young Hamilton hastened to protest. "Oh, I know you fellows now well enough to know how many drinks to pay for. It ain't that."

"Well, then, out with it. What is it? Haven't been up to anything, have you?"

The desire came to Joe to tell this man the whole truth, just what was the matter, and so to relieve his heart. On the impulse he did. If he had expected much from Sadness he was disappointed, for not a muscle of the man's face changed during the entire recital.

When it was over he looked at his companion critically through a wreath of smoke. Then he said: "For a young man who has had for a full year the advantage of the education of the New York clubs, you are strangely young. Your case isn't half as bad as that of nine-tenths of the fellows that hang around here. Now, for instance, my father was hung."

Joe started and gave a gasp of horror.

"Oh, yes, but it was done with a very good rope and by the best citizens of Texas, so it seems that I really ought to be very grateful to them for the distinction they conferred upon my family, but I am not. I am ungratefully sad. A man must be very high or very low to take the sensible view of life that keeps him from being sad. I confess that I have aspired to the depths without ever being fully able to reach them.

"You see, Hamilton, in this life we are all suffering from fever, and no one edges away from the other because he finds him a little warm. It's dangerous when you're not used to it; but once you go through the parching process, you become inoculated against further contagion. Now, there's Barney over there, as decent a fellow as I know; but he has been indicted twice for pocket-picking. Poor Wallace, who is just coming in, and who looks like a jaunty ragpicker, came here six months ago with about two thousand dollars, the proceeds from the sale of a house his father had left him. He'll sleep in one of the club chairs to-night, and not from choice. He spent his two thousand learning. But, after all, it was a good investment. It was like buying an annuity. He begins to know already how to live on others as they have lived on him. The plucked bird's beak is sharpened for others' feathers. From now on Wallace will live, eat, drink, and sleep at the expense of others and will forget to mourn his lost money. He will go on this way until, broken and useless, the poor-house or the potter's field gets him. Oh, it's a fine, rich life, my lad. I know you'll like it. I said you would the first time I saw you. It has plenty of stir in it, and a man never gets lonesome."

Sadness laughed a peculiar laugh, and there was a look in his terribly bright eyes that made Joe creep. If he could only have understood all that the man was saying to him, he might even yet have turned back. But he didn't. The only effect that the talk of Sadness had upon him was to make him feel wonderfully "in it." It gave him a false bravery, and he mentally told himself that now he would not be afraid to face Hattie.

He put out his hand to Sadness with a knowing look. "Thanks, Sadness," he said, "you've helped me lots."

Sadness brushed the proffered hand away and sprang up. "You lie!" he cried, "I haven't; I was only fool enough to try." And he turned hastily away from the table.

Joe looked surprised at first, and then laughed at his friend's retreating form. "Poor old fellow," he said, "drunk again."

There was not a lie in all that Sadness had said either as to their crime or their condition. He belonged to a peculiar class,—one that grows larger and larger each year in New York and which has imitators in every large city in this country. It is a set which lives, like the leech, upon the blood of others, and has no shame in its voluntary pauperism. Some play the races a few months of the year; others, quite as intermittently, gamble at "shoestring" politics and waver from party to party as time or their interests seem to dictate.

It was into this set that Sadness had sarcastically invited Joe, and Joe felt honored. It was very plain to him now that to want a good reputation was the sign of unpardonable immaturity, and that dishonor was the only real thing worth while. It made him feel better.

He was just rising bravely to swagger out to the theatre when Minty Brown came in with one of the clubmen he knew. He bowed and smiled, but she appeared not to notice him at first, and when she did she nudged her companion and laughed.

Suddenly his little courage began to ooze out, and he knew what she must be saying to the fellow at her side, for he looked over at him and grinned. Where now was the philosophy of Sadness? Evidently Minty had not been brought under its educating influences and thought about the whole matter in the old, ignorant way. He began to think of it too. Somehow old teachings and old traditions have an annoying way of coming back upon us in the critical moments of life, although one has long ago recognized how much truer and better some newer ways of thinking are. But Joe would not allow Minty to shatter his dreams by bringing up these old notions. She must be instructed.

He rose and went over to her table.

"Why, Minty," he said, offering his hand, "you ain't mad at me, are you?"

"Go on away f'om hyeah," she said angrily; "I don't want none o' thievin' Berry Hamilton's fambly to speak to me."

"Why, you were all right this evening."

"Yes, but jest out o' pity, an' you was nice 'cause you was afraid I'd tell on you. Go on now."

"Go on now," said Minty's young man, and he looked menacing.

Joe, losing what little self-respect he had, slunk out of the room with scarce courage to go to the theatre and wait for Hattie, who was playing in vaudeville houses pending the opening of her company.

The closing act was just over when he reached the stage door. He was there but a short time when Hattie tripped out and took his arm. Her face was bright and smiling, and there was no suggestion of disgust in the dancing eyes she turned up to him. Evidently she had not

heard, but the thought gave him no particular pleasure, as it left him in suspense as to how she would act when she had heard.

"Let's go somewhere and get some supper," she said; "I'm as hungry as I can be. What are you looking so cut up about?"

"Oh, I ain't feelin' so very good."

"I hope you ain't lettin' that long-tongued Brown woman bother your head, are you?"

His heart seemed to stand still. She did know then.

"Do you know all about it?"

"Why, of course I do. You might know she'd come to me first with her story."

"And you still keep on speaking to me?"

"Now look here, Joe, if you've been drinking, I'll forgive you; if you ain't, you go on and leave me. Say, what do you take me for? Do you think I'd throw down a friend because somebody else talked about him? Well, you don't know Hat Sterling. When Minty told me that story, she was back in my dressing-room, and I sent her out o' there a-flyin', and with a tongue-lashing that she won't forget for a month o' Sundays."

"I reckon that was the reason she jumped on me so hard at the club." He chuckled. He had taken heart again. All that Sadness had said was true, after all, and people thought no less of him. His joy was unbounded.

"So she jumped on you hard, did she? The cat!"

"Oh, she didn't say a thing to me."

"Well, Joe, it's just like this. I ain't an angel, you know that, but I do try to be square, and whenever I find a friend of mine down on his luck, in his pocket-book or his feelings, why, I give him my flipper."

"Why, Hattie," he broke out, unable any longer to control himself, "you're—you're——"

"Oh, I'm just plain Hat Sterling, who won't throw down her friends. Now, come on and get something to eat. If that thing is at the club, we'll go there and show her just how much her talk amounted to."

When they reached the Banner they found Minty still there. She tried on the two the same tactics that she had employed so successfully upon Joe alone. She nudged her companion and tittered. But she had another person to deal with. Hattie Sterling stared at her coldly and indifferently and passed on by her to a seat. Joe proceeded to order supper and other things in the nonchalant way that the woman had enjoined upon him. Minty began to feel distinctly uncomfortable, but it was her business not to be beaten. She laughed outright. Hattie did not seem to hear her. She was beckoning Sadness to her side. He came and sat down.

"Now, look here," she said, "you can't have any supper because you haven't reached the stage of magnificent hunger to make a meal palatable to you. You've got so used to being nearly starved that a meal don't taste good to you under any other circumstances. But your thirst is always available. Jack," she called down the long room to the bartender, "make it three."

"Lean over here; I want to talk to you. See that woman over there by the wall? No, not that one,—the big light woman with Griggs. Well, she's come here with a story trying to throw Joe down, and I want you to help me do her."

"Oh, that's the one that upset our young friend, is it?" said Sadness, turning his mournful eyes upon Minty.

"That's her. So you know about it, do you?"

"Yes, and I'll help do her. She mustn't touch one of the fraternity, you know." He kept his eyes fixed upon the outsider until she squirmed. She could not at all understand this serious conversation directed at her. She wondered if she had gone too far and if they contemplated putting her out. It made her uneasy.

Now, this same Miss Sterling had the faculty of attracting a good deal of attention when she wished to. She brought it into play to-night, and in ten minutes, aided by Sadness, she had a crowd of jolly people about her table. When, as she would have expressed it, "everything was going fat," she suddenly paused and, turning her eyes full upon Minty, said in a voice loud enough for all to hear,—

"Say, boys, you've heard that story about Joe, haven't you?"

They had.

"Well, that's the one that told it; she's come here to try to throw him and me down. Is she going to do it?"

"Well, I guess not!" was the rousing reply, and every face turned towards the now frightened Minty. She rose hastily and, getting her skirts together, fled from the room, followed more leisurely by the crestfallen Griggs. Hattie's laugh and "Thank you, fellows," followed her out.

Matters were less easy for Joe's mother and sister than they were for him. A week or more after this, Kitty found him and told him that Minty's story had reached their employers and that they were out of work.

"You see, Joe," she said sadly, "we've took a flat since we moved from Mis' Jones's, and we had to furnish it. We've got one lodger, Mr. Gibson, a race-horse man, an' he's mighty nice to ma an' me, but that ain't enough. Now, we've got to do something."

Joe was so smitten with sorrow that he gave her a dollar and promised to speak about the matter to a friend of his.

He did speak about it to Hattie.

"You've told me once or twice that your sister could sing. Bring her down here to me, and if she can do anything, I'll get her a place on the stage," was Hattie's answer.

When Kitty heard it she was radiant, but her mother only shook her head and said, "De las' hope, de las' hope."

XII.

"ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE."

KITTY proved herself Joe's sister by falling desperately in love with Hattie Sterling the first time they met. The actress was very gracious to her, and called her "child" in a pretty, patronizing way, and patted her on the cheek.

"So you think you want to go on the stage, do you?"

"Yes'm; I thought it might be right nice for me if I could."

"Joe, go out and get some beer for us, and then I'll hear your sister sing."

Miss Sterling talked as if she were a manager and had only to snap her fingers to be obeyed. When Joe came back with the beer, Kitty drank a glass. She did not like it, but she would not offend her hostess. After this she sang, and Miss Sterling applauded her generously, although the young girl's nervousness kept her from doing her best. The encouragement helped her, and she did better as she became more at home.

"Why, child, you've got a good voice. And, Joe, you've been keeping her shut up all this time. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

The young man had little to say. He had brought Kitty almost under a protest, because he had no confidence in her ability and thought that his "girl" would disillusion her. It did not please him now to find his sister so fully under the limelight and himself "up stage."

"I tell you, now," Hattie Sterling pursued, throwing a brightly stockinged foot upon a chair, "your voice is too good for the chorus. Gi' me a cigarette, Joe. Have one, Kitty?—I'm goin' to call you Kitty. It's nice and home-like, and then we've got to be great chums, you know."

Kitty, unwilling to refuse anything from the sorceress, took her cigarette and lighted it, but a few puffs set her off coughing.

"Tut, tut, Kitty, child, don't do it if you ain't used to it. You'll learn soon enough." Joe wanted to kick his sister for having tried so delicate an art and failed, for he had not yet lost all of his awe of Hattie.

"Now, what I was going to say," the lady resumed after several contemplative puffs, "is that you'll have to begin in the chorus anyway and work your way up. It wouldn't take long for you with your looks

and voice to put one of the up-and-ups out o' the business. Only hope it won't be me. I've had people I've helped to try to do it often enough." She gave a laugh that had just a touch of bitterness in it, for she began to recognize that although she had only been on the stage a short time, she was no longer the all-conquering Hattie Sterling, in the first freshness of her youth.

"Oh, I wouldn't want to push anybody out," Kit expostulated.

"Oh, never mind, you'll soon get bravely over that feeling, and even if you didn't, it wouldn't matter much. The thing has to happen. Somebody's got to go down. We don't last long in this life: it soon wears us out, and when we're worn out and sung out, danced out and played out, the manager has no further use for us, so he reduces us to the ranks or kicks us out entirely."

Joe here thought it time for him to put in a word. "Get out, Hat," he said contemptuously, "you're good for a dozen years yet."

She didn't deign to notice him, save so far as a sniff goes.

"Don't you let what I say scare you, though, Kitty. You've got a good chance, and maybe you'll have more sense than I've got and at least save money while you're in it. But let's get off that. It makes me sick. All you've got to do is to come to the opera-house to-morrow and I'll introduce you to the manager. He's a fool, but I think we can make him do something for you."

"Oh, thank you, I'll be around to-morrow, sure."

"Better come about ten o'clock. There's a rehearsal to-morrow, and you'll find him there. Of course, he'll be pretty rough. He always is at rehearsals, but he'll take to you if he thinks there's anything in you and he can get it out."

Kitty felt herself dismissed and rose to go. Joe did not rise.

"I'll see you later, Kit," he said; "I ain't goin' just yet. Say," he added, when his sister was gone, "you're a hot one. What do you want to give her all that con for? She'll never get in."

"Joe," said Hattie, "don't you get awful tired of being a jackass? Sometimes I want to kiss you, and sometimes I feel as if I had to kick you. I'll compromise with you now by letting you bring me some more beer. This got all stale while your sister was here. I saw she didn't like it, and so I wouldn't drink any more for fear she'd try to keep up with me."

"Kit is a good deal of a jay yet," Joe remarked wisely.

"Oh, yes, this world is full of jays. Lots of 'em have seen enough to make 'em wise, but they're still jays, and don't know it. That's the worst of it. They go around thinking they're 'it,' when they ain't even in the game. Go on and get the beer."

And Joe went, feeling vaguely that he had been sat upon.

Kit flew home with joyous heart to tell her mother of her good

prospects. She burst into the room, crying, "Oh, ma, ma, Miss Hattie thinks I'll do to go on the stage. Ain't it grand?"

She did not meet with the expected warmth of response from her mother.

"I do' know as it'll be so gran'. F'om what I see of dem stage people dey don't seem to 'mount to much. De way dem gals shows demse'ves is right-down bad to me. Is you goin' to dress lak dem we seen dat night?"

Kit hung her head.

"I guess I'll have to."

"Well, ef you have to, I'd ruther see you daid any day. Oh Kit, my little gal, don't do it, don't do it. Don't you go down lak yo' brothah Joe. Joe's gone."

"Why, ma, you don't understand. Joe's somebody now. You ought to've heard how Miss Hattie talked about him. She said he's been her friend for a long while."

"Her frien', yes, an' his own inimy. You needn' pattern aftah dat gal, Kit. She ruint Joe, an' she's aftah you now."

"But nowadays everybody thinks stage people respectable up here."

"Maybe I'm ol'-fashioned, but I can't believe in any ooman's ladyship when she shows herse'f lak dem gals does. Oh Kit, don't do it. Ain't you seen enough? Don't you know enough already to stay away f'om dese hyeah people? Dey don't want nothin' but to pull you down an' den laugh at you w'en you's dragged in de dus'."

"You mustn't feel that a-way, ma. I'm doin' it to help you."

"I do' want no sich help. I'd ruther starve."

Kit did not reply, but there was no yielding in her manner.

"Kit," her mother went on, "dey's some'p'n I ain't nevah tol' you dat I'm goin' to tell you now. Mistah Gibson uset to come to Mis' Jones's lots to see me befo' we moved hyeah, an' he's been talkin' 'bout a good many things to me." She hesitated. "He say dat I ain't no-ways ma'ied to my po' husban', dat a pen'tentiary sentence is de same as a divo'ce, an' if Be'y should live to git out, we'd have to ma'y ag'in. I wouldn't min' dat, Kit, but he say that at Be'y's age dey ain't much chanst of his livin' to git out, an' hyeah I'll live all dis time alone, an' den have no one to tek keer o' me w'en I git ol'. He wants me to ma'y him, Kit. Kit, I love yo' fathah; he's my only one. But Joe, he's gone, an' ef you go, befo' Gawd, I'll tell Tawm Gibson yes."

The mother looked up to see just what effect her plea would have on her daughter. She hoped that what she said would have the desired result. But the girl turned around from fixing her neck-ribbon before the glass, her face radiant. "Why, it'll be splendid. He's such a nice man, an' race-horse men most always have money. Why don't

you marry him, ma? Then I'd feel that you was safe an' settled, an' that you wouldn' be lonesome when the show was out of town."

"You want me to ma'y him an' desert yo' po' pa?"

"I guess what he says is right, ma. I don't reckon we'll ever see pa again, an' you got to do something. You got to live for yourself now."

Her mother dropped her head in her hands. "All right," she said, "I'll do it; I'll ma'y him. I might as well go de way both my children's gone. Po' Be'y, po' Be'y. Ef you evah do come out, Gawd he'p you to baih what you'll fin'." And Mrs. Hamilton rose and tottered from the room, as if the old age she anticipated had already come upon her.

Kit stood looking after her, fear and grief in her eyes. "Poor ma," she said, "an' poor pa. But I know, an' I know it's for the best."

On the next morning she was up early and practising hard for her interview with the managing star of "Martin's Blackbirds."

When she arrived at the theatre Hattie Sterling met her with frank friendliness.

"I'm glad you came early, Kitty," she remarked, "for maybe you can get a chance to talk with Martin before he begins rehearsal and gets all worked up. He'll be a little less like a bear then. But even if you don't see him before then, wait, and don't get scared if he tries to bluff you."

When Mr. Martin came in that morning he had other ideas than that of seeing applicants for places. His show must begin in two weeks, and it was advertised to be larger and better than ever before, when really nothing at all had been done for it. The promise of this advertisement must be fulfilled. Mr. Martin was late and was out of humor with everyone else on account of it. He came in hurried, fierce, and important.

"Mornin', Mr. Smith, mornin', Mrs. Jones. Ha, ladies and gentlemen, all here?"

He shot every word out of his mouth as if the after-taste of it were unpleasant to him. He walked among the chorus like an angry king among his vassals, and his glance was a flash of insolent fire. From his head to his feet he was the very epitome of self-sufficient, brutal conceit.

Kitty trembled as she noted the hush that fell on the people at his entrance. She trembled more as she found his eyes fixed upon her.

"Who's that?" he asked, disregarding her, as if she had been a stick or a stone.

"Well, don't snap her head off. It's a girl friend of mine that wants a place," said Hattie. She was the only one who would brave Martin.

"Humph! Let her wait. I ain't got no time to hear anyone now. Get yourselves in line, you all who are on to that first chorus, while I'm getting into my sweat-shirt."

He disappeared behind a screen, whence he emerged arrayed, or only half arrayed, in a thick absorbing shirt and a thin pair of woollen trousers. Then the work began. The man was indefatigable. He was like the spirit of energy. He was in every place about the stage at once, leading the chorus, showing them steps, twisting some awkward girl into shape, shouting, gesticulating, abusing the pianist.

"Now, now," he would shout, "the left foot on that beat. Bah, bah, stop! You walk like a lot of tin soldiers. Are your joints rusty? Do you want oil? Look here, Taylor, if I didn't know you, I'd take you for a truck. Pick up your feet, open your mouths, and move, move, move! Oh!" and he would drop his head in despair. "And to think that I've got to do something with these things in two weeks—two weeks!" Then he would turn to them again with a sudden reaccession of eagerness. "Now, at it again, at it again! Hold that note, hold it! Now whirl, and on the left foot. Stop that music, stop it! Miss Coster, you'll learn that step in about a thousand years, and I've got nine hundred and ninety-nine years and fifty weeks less time than that to spare. Come here and try that step with me. Don't be afraid to move. Step like a chicken on a hot griddle!" And some blushing girl would come forward and go through the step alone before the rest.

Kitty contemplated the scene with a mind equally divided between fear and anger. She felt scared and discouraged, but every now and then her friend smiled encouragingly upon her from the ranks of moving singers.

Finally, however, her thoughts were broken in upon by hearing Mr. Martin cry, "Oh, quit, quit, and go rest yourselves, you ancient pieces of hickory, and let me forget you for a minute before I go crazy. Where's that new girl now?"

Kitty rose and went towards him, trembling so that she could hardly walk.

"What can you do?"

"I can sing," very faintly.

"Well, if that's the voice you're going to sing in, there won't be many that'll know whether it's good or bad. Well, let's hear something. Do you know any of these?"

And he ran over the titles of several songs. She knew some of them, and he selected one. "Try this. Here, Tom, play it for her."

It was an ordeal for the girl to go through. She had never sung at anything more formidable than a church concert before, where only her immediate acquaintances and townspeople were present. Now to sing before all these strange people, themselves singers, made her feel

faint and awkward. But the courage of desperation came to her, and she struck into the song. At the first her voice wavered and threatened to fail her. It must not. She choked back her fright and forced the music from her lips.

When she was done she was startled to hear Martin burst into a raucous laugh. Such humiliation. She had failed, and instead of telling her, he was bringing her to shame before the whole company. The tears came into her eyes, and she was about giving way when she caught a reassuring nod and smile from Hattie Sterling, and seized on this as a last hope.

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed Martin, "haw, haw, haw! The little one was scared, see? She was scared, d'you understand? But did you see the grit she went at it with? Just took the bit between her teeth and got away. Haw, haw, haw! Now, that's what I like. If all you girls had that spirit, we could do something in two weeks. Try another one, girl."

Kitty's heart had suddenly grown light. She sang the second one better because something within her was singing.

"Good!" said Martin, but he immediately returned to his cold manner. "You watch these girls close and see what they do, and to-morrow be prepared to go into line and move as well as sing."

He immediately turned his attention from her to the chorus, but no slight that he could inflict upon her now could take away the sweet truth that she was engaged and to-morrow would begin work.

On the first night of the show pretty little Kitty Hamilton was pointed out as a girl who wouldn't be in the chorus long. The mother, who was soon to be Mrs. Gibson, sat in the balcony, a grieved, pained look on her face. Joe was in a front row with some of the rest of the gang. He took many potations between the acts, because he was proud.

Mr. Thomas was there. He also was proud, and after the performance he waited for Kitty at the stage door and went forward to meet her as she came out. The look she gave him stopped him, and he let her pass without a word.

"Who'd 'a' thought," he mused, "that the kid had that much nerve? Well, if they don't want to find out things, what do they come to N'Yawk for? It ain't nobody's old Sunday-school picnic. Guess I got out easy, anyhow."

Hattie Sterling took Joe home in a hansom.

"Say," she said, "if you come this way for me again, it's all over, see? Your little sister's a comer, and I've got to hustle to keep up with her."

Joe growled and fell asleep in his chair. One must needs have a strong head or a strong will when one is the brother of a celebrity and would celebrate the distinguished one's success.

XIII.

THE OAKLEYS.

A YEAR after the arrest of Berry Hamilton, and at a time when New York had shown to the eyes of his family so many strange new sights, there were few changes to be noted in the condition of affairs at the Oakley place. Maurice Oakley was perhaps a shade more distrustful of his servants, and consequently more testy with them. Mrs. Oakley was the same acquiescent woman with unbounded faith in her husband's wisdom and judgment. They had letters from Frank now and then, never very cheerful in tone, but always breathing the deepest love and gratitude to them.

His brother found deep cause for congratulation in the tone of these epistles.

"Frank is getting down to work," he would cry exultantly. "He is past the first buoyant enthusiasm of youth. Ah Leslie, when a man begins to be serious, then he begins to be something." And her only answer would be, "I wonder, Maurice, if Claire Lessing will wait for him."

The two had frequent questions to answer as to Frank's doings and prospects, and they had always bright things to say of him, even when his letters gave them no such warrant. Their love for him made them read largely between the lines, and all they read was good.

Between Maurice and his brother no word of the guilty servant ever passed. They each avoided it as an unpleasant subject. Frank had never asked and his brother had never written him aught of the outcome of the case.

Mrs. Oakley had once suggested it. "Brother ought to know," she said, "that Berry is being properly punished."

"By no means," replied her husband. "You know that it would only hurt him. He shall never know if I have to tell him."

"You are right, Maurice; you are always right. We must shield Frank from the pain it would cause him. Poor fellow, he is so sensitive."

Their hearts were still steadfastly fixed upon the union of this younger brother with Claire Lessing. That any woman could have power enough to take him away from his art they very much doubted. But they could hope, and hope made them eager to open every letter that bore the French postmark. Always, it might contain news that he was coming home, or that he had made a great success, or, better, some inquiry after Claire. A long time they had waited, but found no such tidings in the letters from Paris.

At last, as Maurice Oakley sat in his library one day, the servant brought him a letter more bulky in weight and appearance than any

he had yet received. His eyes glistened with pleasure as he read the postmark. "A letter from Frank," he said joyously, "and an important one, I'll wager."

He smiled as he weighed it in his hand and caressed it. Mrs. Oakley was out shopping, and as he knew how deep her interest was, he hesitated to break the seal before she returned. He curbed his natural desire and laid the heavy envelope down on the desk. But he could not deny himself the pleasure of speculating as to its contents.

It was such a large, interesting-looking package. What might it not contain? It simply reeked of possibilities. Had anyone banteringly told Maurice Oakley that he had such a deep vein of sentiment he would have denied it with scorn and laughter. But here he found himself sitting with the letter in his hand and weaving stories as to its contents.

First, now, it might be a notice that Frank had received the badge of the Legion of Honor. No, no, that was too big, and he laughed aloud at his own folly, wondering the next minute, with half shame, why he laughed, for did he, after all, believe anything was too big for that brother of his? Well, let him begin, anyway, away down. Let him say, for instance, that the letter told of the completion and sale of a great picture. Frank had sold small ones. He would be glad of this, for his brother had written him several times of things that were a-doing, but not yet of anything that was done. Or, better yet, let the letter say that some picture, long finished, but of which the artist's pride and anxiety had forbidden him to speak, had made a glowing success, the success it deserved. This sounded well and seemed not at all beyond the bounds of possibility. It was an alluring vision.

"My fancies go on and conquer the world for my brother," he muttered. "He will follow their flight one day and do it himself."

The letter drew his eyes back to it. It seemed to invite him, to beg him even. "No, I will not do it; I will wait until Leslie comes. She will be as glad to hear the good news as I am."

His dreams were taking the shape of reality in his mind, and he was believing all that he wanted to believe.

He turned to a picture painted by Frank which hung over the mantel. He dwelt lovingly upon it, seeing in it the touch of a genius.

"Surely," he said, "this new picture cannot be greater than that, though it shall hang where kings can see it and this only graces the library of my poor house. It has the feeling of a woman's soul, with the strength of a man's heart. When Frank and Claire marry I shall give it back to them. It is too great a treasure for a clod like me. Heigho! why will women be so long a-shopping?"

He glanced again at the letter, and his hand went out involuntarily towards it. He fondled it, smiling.

"Ah, Lady Leslie, I've a mind to open it to punish you for staying so long."

He essayed to be playful, but he knew that he was trying to make a compromise with himself because his eagerness grew stronger than his gallantry. He laid the letter down and picked it up again. He studied the postmark over and over. He got up and walked to the window and back again, and then began fumbling in his pockets for his knife. No, he did not want it; yes, he did. He would just cut the envelope and make believe he had read it to pique his wife; but he would not read it. Yes, that was it. He found the knife and slit the paper. His fingers trembled as he touched the sheets that protruded. Why would not Leslie come? Did she not know that he was waiting for her? She ought to have known that there was a letter from Paris to-day, for it had been a month since they had had one.

There was a sound of footsteps without. He sprang up, crying "I've been waiting so long for you!" A servant opened the door to bring him a message. Oakley dismissed him angrily. What did he want to go down to the Continental for to drink and talk politics to a lot of muddle-pated fools when he had a brother in Paris who was an artist and a letter from him lay unread in his hand? His patience and his temper were going. Leslie was careless and unfeeling. She ought to come; he was tired of waiting.

A carriage rolled up the driveway and he dropped the letter guiltily, as if it were not his own. He would only say that he had grown tired of waiting and started to read it. But it was only Mrs. Davis's footman leaving a note for Leslie about some charity.

He went back to the letter. Well, it was his. Leslie had forfeited her right to see it as soon as he. It might be mean, but it was not dishonest. No, he would not read it now, but he would take it out and show her that he had exercised his self-control in spite of her shortcomings. He laid it on the desk once more. It leered at him. He might just open the sheets enough to see the lines that began it, and read no further. Yes, he would do that. Leslie could not feel hurt at such a little thing.

The first line had only "Dear Brother." "Dear Brother!" Why not the second? That could not hold much more. The second line held him, and the third and the fourth, and as he read on, unmindful of what Leslie might think or feel, his face turned from the ruddy glow of pleasant anxiety to the pallor of grief and terror. He was not half way through it when Mrs. Oakley's voice in the hall announced her coming. He did not hear her. He sat staring at the page before him, his lips apart and his eyes staring. Then with a cry that echoed through the house, crumpling the sheets in his hand, he fell forward fainting to the floor, just as his wife rushed into the room.

"What is it?" she cried. "Maurice! Maurice!"

He lay on the floor staring up at the ceiling, the letter clutched in his hands. She ran to him and lifted up his head, but he gave no sign of life. Already the servants were crowding to the door. She bade one of them to hasten for a doctor, others to bring water and brandy, and the rest to be gone. As soon as she was alone she loosed the crumpled sheets from his hand, for she felt that this must have been the cause of her husband's strange attack. Without a thought of wrong, for they had no secrets from each other, she glanced at the opening lines. Then she forgot the unconscious man at her feet and read the letter through to the end.

The letter was in Frank's neat hand, a little shaken, perhaps, by nervousness.

"DEAR BROTHER," it ran, "I know you will grieve at receiving this, and I wish that I might bear your grief for you, but I cannot, though I have as heavy a burden as this can bring you. Mine would have been lighter to-day, perhaps, had you been more straightforward with me. I am not blaming you, however, for I know that my hypocrisy made you believe me possessed of a really soft heart, and you thought to spare me. Until yesterday, when in a letter from Esterton he casually mentioned the matter, I did not know that Berry was in prison, else this letter would have been written sooner. I have been wanting to write it for so long, and yet have been too great a coward to do so.

"I know that you will be disappointed in me, and just what that disappointment will cost you I know; but you must know the truth. I shall never see your face again, or I should not dare to tell it even now. You will remember that I begged you to be easy on your servant. You thought it was only my kindness of heart. It was not; I had a deeper reason. I knew where the money had gone and dared not tell. Berry is as innocent as yourself—and I—well, it is a story, and let me tell it to you.

"You have had so much confidence in me, and I hate to tell you that it was all misplaced. I have no doubt that I should not be doing it now but that I have drunken absinthe enough to give me the emotional point of view, which I shall regret to-morrow. I do not mean that I am drunk. I can think clearly and write clearly, but my emotions are extremely sensitive.

"Do you remember Claire's saying at the table that night of the farewell dinner that some dark-eyed mademoiselle was waiting for me? She did not know how truly she spoke, though I fancy she saw how I flushed when she said it; for I was already in love—madly so.

"I need not describe her. I need say nothing about her, for I know that nothing I say can ever persuade you to forgive her for taking me from you. This has gone on since I

first came here and I dared not tell you, for I saw whither your eyes had turned. I loved this girl, and she both inspired and hindered my work. Perhaps I would have been successful had I not met her, perhaps not.

"I love her too well to marry her and make of our devotion a stale, prosy thing of duty and compulsion. When a man does not marry a woman he must keep her better than he would a wife. It costs. All that you gave me went to make her happy.

"Then when I was about leaving you the catastrophe came. I wanted much to carry back to her. I gambled to make more. I would surprise her. Luck was against me. Night after night I lost. Then, just before the dinner, I woke from my frenzy to find all that I had was gone. I would have asked you for more, and you would have given it; but that strange, ridiculous something which we misname Southern honor, that honor which strains at a gnat and swallows a camel, withheld me, and I preferred to do worse. So I lied to you. The money from my cabinet was not stolen save by myself. I am a liar and a thief, but your eyes shall never tell me so.

"Tell the truth and have Berry released. I can stand it. Write me but one letter to tell me of this. Do not plead with me, do not forgive me, do not seek to find me, for from this time I shall be as one who has perished from the earth; I shall be no more

"Your brother,

"FRANK."

By the time the servants came they found Mrs. Oakley as white as her lord. But with firm hands and compressed lips she ministered to his needs pending the doctor's arrival. She bathed his face and temples, chafed his hands, and forced the brandy between his lips. Finally he stirred and his hands gripped.

"The letter!" he gasped.

"Yes, dear, I have it; I have it."

"Give it to me!" he cried. She handed it to him. He seized it and thrust it into his breast.

"Did—did—you read it?"

"Yes; I did not know——"

"Oh my God, I did not intend that you should see it. I wanted the secret for my own. I wanted to carry it to my grave with me. Oh Frank, Frank, Frank!"

"Never mind, Maurice. It is as if you alone knew it."

"It is not, I say, it is not!"

He turned upon his face and began to weep passionately, not like a man, but like a child whose last toy has been broken.

"Oh my God," he moaned, "my brother, my brother!"

"Sh, dearie, think—it's—it's—Frank."

"That's it, that's it—that's what I can't forget. It's Frank,—Frank, my brother."

Suddenly he sat up and his eyes stared straight into hers.

"Leslie, no one must ever know what was in that letter," he said calmly.

"No one shall, Maurice; come, let us burn it."

"Burn it? No, no," he cried, clutching at his breast. "It must not be burned. What, burn my brother's secret? No, no, I must carry it with me,—carry it with me to the grave."

"But, Maurice——"

"I must carry it with me."

She saw that he was overwrought, and so did not argue with him.

When the doctor came he found Maurice Oakley in bed, but better. The medical man diagnosed the case and decided that he had received some severe shock. He feared too for his heart, for the patient constantly held his hands pressed against his bosom. In vain the doctor pleaded; he would not take them down, and when the wife added her word the physician gave up, and, after prescribing, left, much puzzled in mind.

"It's a strange case," he said; "there's something more than the nervous shock that makes him clutch his chest like that, and yet I have never noticed signs of heart trouble in Oakley. Oh, well, business worry will produce anything in anybody."

It was soon common talk about the town about Maurice Oakley's attack. In the seclusion of his chamber he was saying to his wife:

"Ah, Leslie, you and I will keep the secret. No one shall ever know."

"Yes, dear, but—but—what of Berry?"

"What of Berry?" he cried, starting up excitedly. "What is Berry to Frank? What is that nigger to my brother? What are his sufferings to the honor of my family and name?"

"Never mind, Maurice, never mind, you are right."

"It must never be known, I say, even if Berry has to rot in jail."

So they wrote a lie to Frank and buried the secret in their breasts, and Oakley wore its visible form upon his heart.

XIV.

FRANKENSTEIN.

It may be true that the habits of years are hard to change, but this is not true of the first sixteen or seventeen years of a young person's life, else Kitty Hamilton and Joe could not so easily have become what they were. It had taken barely five years to accomplish an entire metamorphosis of their characters. In Joe's case even a shorter time was needed. He was so ready to go down that it needed but a gentle

push to start him, and once started, there was nothing within him to hold him back from the depths. For his will was flabby as his conscience, and his pride, which stands to some men for conscience, had no definite aim or direction.

Hattie Sterling had given him both his greatest impulse for evil and for good. She had at first given him his gentle push, but when she saw that his collapse would lose her a faithful and useful slave she had sought to check his course. Her threat of severance of their relations had held him up for a little time, and she began to believe that he was safe again. He went back to the work he had neglected, and acted in most things as a sound, sensible being. Then, all of a sudden, he went down again, and went down badly. She kept her promise and threw him over. Then he became a hanger-on at the clubs, a genteel loafer. He used to say that at last he was one of the boys that Sadness had spoken of. He did not work, and yet he lived and ate and was proud of his degradation. But he soon tired of being separated from Hattie and reformed. After some demur she forgave him. His reform lasted for a few months. He fell again. For almost four years this had happened intermittently. Finally he took a turn for the better that endured so long that Hattie Sterling again gave him her faith. Then the woman made her mistake. She warmed to him. She showed him that she was proud of him. He went forth at once to celebrate his victory. He did not return to her for three days. Then he was battered, unkempt, and thick of speech.

She looked at him in silent contempt for awhile as he sat nursing his aching head.

"Well, you're a beauty," she said finally with cutting scorn.

He groaned and his head sank lower.

His helplessness, instead of inspiring her with pity, inflamed her with an unfeeling anger that burst forth in a volume of taunts.

"You're the thing I've given up all my chances for—you, a miserable, drunken jay, without a jay's decency. Well, you know what I told you the last time you got so. I mean it too. You're not the only star in sight—see?"

She laughed meanly and began to sing, "You'll have to find another baby now."

For the first time he looked up, and his eyes were full of tears,—tears both of grief and intoxication. There was the expression of a whipped dog on his face.

"Do', Ha'ie, do'," he pleaded, stretching out his hands to her.

Her eyes blazed back at him, but she sang on insolently, tauntingly. The very inanity of the man disgusted her, and on a sudden impulse she sprang up and struck him full in the face with the flat of her hand. He was too weak to resist the blow, and, tumbling from the

chair, fell limply to the floor, where he lay at her feet, alternately weeping aloud and quivering with drunken, hiccupping sobs.

"Get up," she cried, "get up and get out o' here. You sha'n't lay around my house."

He had already begun to fall into a drunken sleep, but she shook him, got him to his feet, and pushed him outside the door. "Now, go, you drunken dog, and never put your foot inside this house again."

He stood outside, swaying dizzily upon his feet and looking back with dazed eyes at the door; then he muttered: "Pu' me out, wi' you? Pu' me out, damn you! Well, I ki' you. See 'f I don't," and he half walked, half fell down the street.

Sadness and Skaggsy were together at the club that night. Five years had not changed the latter as to wealth or position or inclination, and he was still a frequent visitor at the Banner. He always came in alone now, for Maudie had gone the way of all the half-world and reached depths to which Mr. Skaggs's job prevented him from following her. However, he mourned truly for his lost companion, and to-night he was in a particularly pensive mood.

Someone was playing rag-time on the piano, and the dancers were wheeling in time to the music. Skaggsy looked at them regretfully as he sipped his liquor. It made him think of Maudie. He sighed and turned away.

"I tell you, Sadness," he said impulsively, "dancing is the poetry of motion."

"Yes," replied Sadness, "and dancing in rag-time is the dialect poetry."

The reporter did not like this. It savored of flippancy, and he was about entering upon a discussion to prove that Sadness had no soul when Joe, with bloodshot eyes and disordered clothes, staggered in and reeled towards them.

"Drunk again," said Sadness. "Really, it's a waste of time for Joe to sober up. Hullo, there!" as the young man brought up against him, "take a seat." He put him in a chair at the table. "Been lushin' a bit, eh?"

"Gi' me some'n' drink."

"Oh, a hair of the dog. Some men shave their dogs clean, and then have hydrophobia. Here, Jack!"

They drank, and then, as if the whiskey had done him good, Joe sat up in his chair.

"Ha'ie's throwed me down."

"Lucky dog! You might have known it would happen sooner or later. Better sooner than never."

Skaggs smoked in silence and looked at Joe.

"I'm goin' to kill her."

"I wouldn't if I were you. Take old Sadness's advice and thank your stars that you're rid of her."

"I'm goin' to kill her." He paused and looked at them drowsily. Then, bracing himself up again, he broke out suddenly: "Say, d'ever tell you 'bout the ol' man? He never stole that money. Know he di'n'."

He threatened to fall asleep now, but the reporter was all alert. He scented a story.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "did you hear that? Bet the chap stole it himself and's letting the old man suffer for it. Great story, ain't it? Come, come, wake up here. Three more, Jack. What about your father?"

"Father? Whose father? Oh, do' bother me. What?"

"Here, here, tell us about your father and the money. If he didn't steal it, who did?"

"Who did? Tha's it; who did? Ol' man di'n' steal it, know he di'n'."

"Oh, let him alone, Skaggsy, he don't know what he's saying."

"Yes, he does; a drunken man tells the truth."

"In some cases," said Sadness.

"Oh, let me alone, man. I've been trying for years to get a big sensation for my paper, and if this story is one, I'm a made man."

The drink seemed to revive the young man again, and by bits Skaggs was able to pick out of him the story of his father's arrest and conviction. At its close he relapsed into stupidity, murmuring "She throwed me down."

"Well," sneered Sadness, "you see drunken men tell the truth, and you don't seem to get much guilt out of our young friend. You're disappointed, aren't you?"

"I confess I am disappointed, but I've got an idea, just the same."

"Oh, you have? Well, don't handle it carelessly; it might go off." And Sadness rose. The reporter sat thinking for a time and then followed him, leaving Joe in a drunken sleep at the table. There he lay for more than two hours. When he finally awoke, he started up as if some determination had come to him in his sleep. A part of the helplessness of his intoxication had gone, but his first act was to call for more whiskey. This he gulped down, and followed with another and another. For awhile he stood still, brooding silently, his red eyes blinking at the light. Then he turned abruptly and left the club.

It was very late when he reached Hattie's door, but he opened it with his latch-key, as he had been used to do. He stopped to help himself to a glass of brandy, as he had so often done before. Then he went directly to her room. She was a light sleeper, and his step awakened her.

"Who is it?" she cried in affright.

"It's me." His voice was steadier now, but grim.

"What do you want? Didn't I tell you never to come here again? Get out or I'll have you taken out."

She sprang up in bed, glaring angrily at him.

His hands twitched nervously, as if her will were conquering him and he were uneasy, but he held her eye with his own.

"You put me out to-night," he said.

"Yes, and I'm going to do it again. You're drunk." She started to rise, but he took a step towards her and she paused. He looked as she had never seen him look before. His face was ashen and his eye like fire and blood. She quailed beneath the look. He took another step towards her.

"You put me out to-night," he repeated, "like a dog."

His step was steady and his tone was clear, menacingly clear. She shrank back from him, back to the wall. Still his hands twitched and his eye held her. Still he crept slowly towards her, his lips working and his hands moving convulsively.

"Joe, Joe," she said hoarsely, "what's the matter. Oh, don't look at me like that."

The gown had fallen away from her breast and showed the convulsive fluttering of her heart.

He broke into a laugh, a dry, murderous laugh, and his hands sought each other, while the fingers twined over one another like coiling serpents.

"You put me out—you—you, and you made me what I am." The realization of what he was, of his foulness and degradation, seemed just to have come to him fully. "You made me what I am, and then you sent me away. You let me come back, and now you put me out."

She gazed at him fascinated. She tried to scream and she could not. This was not Joe. This was not the boy whom she had turned and twisted about her little finger. This was a terrible, terrible man or a monster.

He moved a step nearer her. His eyes fell to her throat. For an instant she lost their steady glare and then she found her voice. The scream was checked as it began. His fingers had closed over her throat just where the gown had left it temptingly bare. They gave it the caress of death. She struggled. They held her. Her eyes prayed to his. But his were the fire of hell. She fell back upon her pillow in silence. He had not uttered a word. He held her. Finally he flung her from him like a rag and sank into a chair. And there the officers found him when Hattie Sterling's disappearance had become a strange thing.

XV.

"DEAR, DAMNED, DELIGHTFUL TOWN."

WHEN Joe was taken there was no spirit or feeling left in him. He moved mechanically, as if without sense or volition. The first impression he gave was that of a man overacting insanity. But this was soon removed by the very indifference with which he met everything concerned with his crime. From the very first he made no effort to exonerate or to vindicate himself. He talked little, and only in a dry, stupefied way. He was as one whose soul is dead, and perhaps it was; for all the little soul of him had been wrapped up in the body of this one woman, and the stroke that took her life had killed him too.

The only thing which he noticed or seemed to have any affection for was a little pet dog which had been hers and which they sometimes allowed to be with him after the life sentence had been passed upon him and when he was awaiting removal to prison. He would sit for hours with the animal in his lap, caressing it dumbly. There was a mute sorrow in the eyes of both man and dog, and they seemed to take comfort in each other's presence. There was no need of any sign between them. They had both loved her, had they not? So they understood.

Sadness saw him and came back to the Banner, torn and unnerved by the sight. "I saw him," he said with a shudder, "and it'll take more whiskey than Jack can give me in a year to wash the memory of him out of me. Why, man, it shocked me all through. It's a pity they didn't send him to the chair. It couldn't have done him much harm and would have been a real mercy."

And so Sadness and all the club, with a muttered "Poor devil!" dismissed him. He was gone. Why should they worry? Only one more who had got into the whirlpool, enjoyed the sensation for a moment, and then swept dizzily down. There were, indeed, some who for an earnest hour sermonized about it and said: "Here is another example of the pernicious influence of the city on untrained Negroes. Oh, is there no way to keep these people from rushing away from the small villages and country districts of the South up to the cities, where they cannot battle with the terrible force of a strange and unusual environment? Is there no way to prove to them that woollen-shirted, brown-jeaned simplicity is infinitely better than broadclothed degradation?" They wanted to preach to these people that good agriculture was better than bad art—that it was better and nobler for them to sing to God across the Southern fields than to dance for rowdies in a Northern hall. They wanted to dare to say that the South has its faults—no one condones them—and its disadvantages, but that even what they suffered from these was better than what awaited them in

the great alleys of New York. There the bodies were restrained, and they chafed; but here the soul would fester, and they would be content.

This was but for an hour, for even while they exclaimed they knew that there was no way, and that the stream of young Negro life would continue to flow up from the South, dashing itself against the hard necessities of the city and breaking like waves against a rock—that until the gods grew tired of their cruel sport there must still be sacrifices to false ideals and unreal ambitions.

There was one heart, though, that neither dismissed Joe with gratuitous pity nor sermonized about him. The mother-heart had only room for grief and pain. Already it had borne its share. It had known sorrow for a lost husband, tears at the neglect and brutality of a new companion, shame for a daughter's sake, and it had seemed already filled to overflowing. And yet the Fates had put in this one other burden until it seemed it must burst with the weight of it.

To Fannie Hamilton's mind now all her boy's shortcomings became as naught. He was not her wayward, erring, criminal son. She only remembered that he was her son, and wept for him as such. She forgot his curses, while her memory went back to the sweetness of his baby prattle and the soft words of his tenderer youth. Until the last she clung to him, holding him guiltless, and to her thought they took to prison not Joe Hamilton, a convicted criminal, but Joey, Joey, her boy, her first-born—a martyr.

The pretty Miss Kitty Hamilton was less deeply impressed. The arrest and subsequent conviction of her brother was quite a blow. She felt the shame of it keenly, and some of the grief. To her, coming as it did just at a time when the company was being strengthened and she more importantly featured than ever, it was decidedly inopportune, for no one could help connecting her name with the affair.

For a long time she and her brother had scarcely been upon speaking terms. During Joe's frequent lapses from industry he had been prone to "touch" his sister for the wherewithal to supply his various wants. When, finally, she grew tired and refused to be "touched" he rebuked her for withholding that which save for his help she would never have been able to make. This went on until they were almost entirely estranged. He was wont to say that "now his sister was up in the world, she had got the big head," and she to retort that her brother "wanted to use her for a soft thing."

From the time that she went on the stage she had begun to live her own life, a life in which the chief aim was the possession of good clothes and the ability to attract the attention which she had learned to crave. The greatest sign of interest she showed in her brother's affair was, at first, to offer her mother money to secure a lawyer. But when Joe confessed all, she consoled herself with the reflection that

perhaps it was for the best, and kept her money in her pocket with a sense of satisfaction. She was getting to be so very much more Joe's sister. She did not go to see her brother. She was afraid it might make her nervous while she was in the city, and she went on the road with her company before he was taken away.

Miss Kitty Hamilton had to be very careful about her nerves and her health. She had had experiences, and her voice was not as good as it used to be, and her beauty had to be aided by cosmetics. So she went away from New York, and only read of all that happened when someone called her attention to it in the papers.

Berry Hamilton in his Southern prison knew nothing of all this, for no letters had passed between him and his family for more than two years. The very cruelty of destiny defeated itself in this and was kind.

XVI.

SKAGGS'S THEORY.

THERE was, perhaps, more depth to Mr. Skaggs than most people gave him credit for having. However it may be, when he got an idea into his head, whether it were insane or otherwise, he had a decidedly tenacious way of holding to it. Sadness had been disposed to laugh at him when he announced that Joe's drunken story of his father's troubles had given him an idea. But it was, nevertheless, true, and that idea had stayed with him clear through the exciting events that followed on that fatal night. He thought and dreamed of it until he had made a working theory. Then one day, with a boldness that he seldom assumed when in the sacred Presence, he walked into the office and laid his plans before the editor. They talked together for some time, and the editor seemed hard to convince.

The result of the interview was that within an hour and a half he was speeding southward.

It is almost a question whether Skaggs had a theory or whether he had told himself a pretty story and, as usual, believed it. No one else would have thought of the wild thing that was in the reporter's mind. The detective had not thought of it five years before, nor had Maurice Oakley and his friends had an inkling, and here was one of the New York *Universe's* young men going miles to prove his idea about something that did not at all concern him.

When Skaggs reached the town which had been the home of the Hamiltons he went at once to the Continental Hotel. He had as yet formulated no plan of immediate action, and with a fool's or a genius's belief in his destiny he sat down to await the turn of events. His first move would be to get acquainted with some of his neighbors. This was no difficult matter, as the bar of the Continental was still the gathering-place of some of the city's choice spirits of the old régime.

Thither he went, and his convivial cheerfulness soon placed him on terms of equality with many of his kind.

He insinuated that he was looking around for business prospects. This proved his open-sesame. Five years had not changed the Continental frequenters much, and Skaggs's intention immediately brought Beachfield Davis down upon him with the remark, "If a man wants to go into business, business for a gentleman, suh, Gad, there's no finer or better-paying business in the world than breeding blooded dogs—that is, if you get a man of experience to go in with you."

"Dogs, dogs," drivelled old Horace Talbot. "Beachfield's always talking about dogs. I remember the night we were all discussing that Hamilton nigger's arrest, Beachfield said it was a sign of total depravity because his man hunted 'possums with his hound." The old man laughed inanely. The hotel whiskey was getting on his nerves.

The reporter opened his eyes and his ears. He had stumbled upon something, at any rate.

"What was it about some nigger's arrest, sir?" he asked respectfully.

"Oh, it wasn't anything much. Only an old and trusted servant robbed his master, and my theory——"

"But you will remember, Mr. Talbot," broke in Davis, "that I proved your theory to be wrong and cited a conclusive instance."

"Yes, a 'possum-hunting dog."

"I am really anxious to hear about the robbery, though. It seems such an unusual thing for a Negro to steal a great amount."

"Just so, and that was part of my theory. Now——"

"It's an old story and a long one, Mr. Skaggs, and one of merely local repute," interjected Colonel Saunders. "I don't think it could possibly interest you, who are familiar with the records of the really great crimes that take place in a city such as New York."

"Those things do interest me very much, though. I am something of a psychologist, and I often find the smallest and most insignificant-appearing details pregnant with suggestions. Won't you let me hear the story, Colonel?"

"Why, yes, though there's little in it, save I am one of the few men who have come to believe that the Negro, Berry Hamilton, is not the guilty party."

"Nonsense! nonsense!" said Talbot; "of course Berry was guilty, but, as I said before, I don't blame him. The Negroes——"

"Total depravity," said Davis. "Now, look at my dog——"

"If you will retire with me to the farther table I will give you whatever of the facts that I can call to mind."

As unobtrusively as they could, they drew apart from the others and seated themselves at a more secluded table, leaving Talbot and

Davis wrangling, as of old, over their theories. When the glasses were filled and the pipes going the Colonel began his story, interlarding it frequently with comments of his own.

"Now, in the first place, Mr. Skaggs," he said when the tale was done, "I am lawyer enough to see for myself how weak the evidence was upon which the Negro was convicted, and later events have done much to confirm me in the opinion that he was innocent."

"Later events?"

"Yes." The Colonel leaned across the table and his voice fell to a whisper. "Four years ago a great change took place in Maurice Oakley. It happened in the space of a day, and no one knows the cause of it. From a social, companionable man, he became a recluse, shunning visitors and dreading society. From an open-hearted, unsuspicious neighbor, he became secretive and distrustful of his own friends. From an active business man he has become a retired brooder. He sees no one if he can help it. He writes no letters and receives none, not even from his brother, it is said. And all of this came about in the space of twenty-four hours."

"But what was the beginning of it?"

"No one knows, save that one day he had some sort of nervous attack. By the time the doctor was called he was better, but he kept clutching his hand over his heart. Naturally, the physician wanted to examine him there, but the very suggestion of it seemed to throw him into a frenzy, and his wife too begged the doctor, an old friend of the family, to desist. Maurice Oakley had been as sound as a dollar, and no one of the family had had any tendency to heart affection."

"It is strange."

"Strange it is, but I have my theory."

"His actions are like those of a man guarding a secret."

"Sh! His Negro laundress says that there is an inside pocket in his undershirts."

"An inside pocket?"

"Yes."

"And for what?" Skaggs was trembling with eagerness.

The Colonel dropped his voice lower.

"We can only speculate," he said; "but, as I have said, I have my theory. Oakley was a just man, and in punishing his old servant for the supposed robbery it is plain that he acted from principle. But he is also a proud man, and would hate to confess that he had been in the wrong. So I believe that the cause of his first shock was the finding of the money that he supposed gone. Unwilling to admit this error, he lets the misapprehension go on, and it is the money which he carries in his secret pocket with morbid fear of its discovery that has made him dismiss his servants, leave his business, and refuse to see his friends."

"A very natural conclusion, Colonel, and I must say that I believe you. It is strange that others have not seen as you have seen and brought the matter to light."

"Well, you see, Mr. Skaggs, none are so dull as the people who think they think. I can safely say that there is not another man in this town who has lighted upon the real solution of this matter, though it has been openly talked of for so long. But as for bringing it to light, no one would think of doing that. It would be sure to hurt Oakley's feelings, and he is of one of our best families."

"Ah, yes, perfectly right."

Skaggs had got all that he wanted, much more, in fact, than he had expected, but the Colonel held him for awhile yet to enlarge upon the views that he had expressed.

When the reporter finally left him it was with a cheery "Good-night, Colonel. If I were a criminal, I should be afraid of that analytical mind of yours!"

He went upstairs chuckling. "The old fool," he cried as he flung himself into a chair. "I've got it! I've got it! Maurice Oakley must see me, and then what?" He sat down to think out what he should do to-morrow. Again, with his fine disregard of ways and means, he determined to trust to luck, and, as he expressed it, "brace old Oakley."

Accordingly he went about nine o'clock the next morning to Oakley's house. A gray-haired, sad-eyed woman inquired his errand.

"I want to see Mr. Oakley," he said.

"You cannot see him. Mr. Oakley is not well and does not see visitors."

"But I must see him, madam; I am here upon business of importance."

"You can tell me just as well as him. I am his wife and transact all of his business."

"I can tell no one but the master of the house himself."

"You cannot see him. It is against his orders."

"Very well," replied Skaggs, descending one step; "it is his loss, not mine. I have tried to do my duty and failed. Simply tell him that I came from Paris."

"Paris?" cried a querulous voice behind the woman's back. "Leslie, why do you keep the gentleman at the door? Let him come in at once."

Mrs. Oakley stepped from the door and Skaggs went in. Had he seen Oakley before he would have been shocked at the change in his appearance, but as it was, the nervous, white-haired man who stood shiftily before him told him nothing of an eating secret long carried. The man's face was gray and haggard, and deep lines were cut under

his staring, fish-like eyes. His hair tumbled in white masses over his pallid forehead, and his lips twitched as he talked.

"You're from Paris, sir, from Paris?" he said. "Come in, come in."

His motions were nervous and erratic. Skaggs followed him into the library and the wife disappeared in another direction.

It would have been hard to recognize in the Oakley of the present the man of a few years before. The strong frame had gone away to bone, and nothing of his old power sat on either brow or chin. He was as a man who trembled on the brink of insanity. His guilty secret had been too much for him, and Skaggs's own fingers twitched as he saw his host's hands seek the breast of his jacket every other moment.

"It is there the secret is hidden," he said to himself, "and whatever it is, I must have it. But how—how? I can't knock the man down and rob him in his own house." But Oakley himself proceeded to give him his first cue.

"You—you—perhaps have a message from my brother—my brother who is in Paris? I have not heard from him for some time."

Skaggs's mind worked quickly. He remembered the Colonel's story. Evidently the brother had something to do with the secret. "Now or never," he thought. So he said boldly, "Yes, I have a message from your brother."

The man sprang up, clutching again at his breast. "You have? you have? Give it to me. After four years he sends me a message! Give it to me."

The reporter looked steadily at the man. He knew that he was in his power, that his very eagerness would prove traitor to his discretion.

"Your brother bade me to say to you that you have a terrible secret, that you bear it in your breast—there—there. I am his messenger. He bids you to give it to me."

Oakley had shrunk back as if he had been struck.

"No, no," he gasped, "no, no. I have no secret." The reporter moved nearer him. He shrank against the wall, his lips working convulsively and his hand tearing at his breast as Skaggs drew nearer. He attempted to shriek, but his voice was husky and broke off in a gasping whisper.

"Give it to me, as your brother commands."

"No, no, no, no! It is not his secret; it is mine. I must carry it here always, do you hear? I must carry it till I die. Go away! Go away!"

Skaggs seized him. Oakley struggled weakly, but he had no strength. The reporter's hand sought the secret pocket. He felt a paper beneath his fingers. Oakley gasped hoarsely as he drew it forth. Then, raising his voice, gave one agonized cry, and sank to the floor,

frothing at the mouth. At the cry rapid footsteps were heard in the hall-way, and Mrs. Oakley threw open the door.

"What is the matter?" she cried.

"My message has somewhat upset your husband," was the cool answer.

"But his breast is open. You have been in his breast. You have taken something from him. Give it to me, or I shall call for help."

Skaggs had not reckoned on this, but his wits came to the rescue.

"You dare not call for help," he said, "or the world will know."

She wrung her hands helplessly, crying "Oh, give it to me! give it to me! We've never done you any harm."

"But you've harmed someone else; that is enough."

He moved towards the door, but she sprang in front of him with the fierceness of a tigress protecting her young. She attacked him with teeth and nails. She was pallid with fury, and it was all he could do to protect himself and yet not injure her. Finally, when her anger had taken her strength, he succeeded in getting out. He flew down the hall-way and out of the front door, the woman's screams following him. He did not pause to read his precious letter until he was safe in his room at the Continental Hotel. Then he sprang to his feet, crying "Thank God! Thank God! I was right, and the *Universe* shall have a sensation. The brother is the thief, and Berry Hamilton is an innocent man. Hurrah! Now, who is it that has come on a wild-geese chase? Who is it that ought to handle his idea carefully? Heigho, Sadness, my man, the joke'll be on you, and old Skaggsy will have done some good in the world."

XVII.

A YELLOW JOURNAL.

MR. SKAGGS had no qualms of conscience about the manner in which he had come by the damaging evidence against Maurice Oakley. It was enough for him that he had it. A corporation, he argued, had no soul, and therefore no conscience. How much less, then, should so small a part of a great corporation as himself be expected to have one?

He had his story. It was vivid, interesting, dramatic. It meant the favor of his editor, a big thing for the *Universe*, and a fatter lining for his own pocket. He sat down to put his discovery on paper before he attempted to do anything else.

He told his story well, with an eye to every one of its salient points. He sent a picture of Berry Hamilton as he had appeared at the time of his arrest. He sent a picture of the Oakley home and of the cottage where the servant and his family had been so happy. There was a strong pen-picture of the man, Oakley, grown haggard and morose from carrying his guilty secret, of his confusion when confronted with the supposed knowledge of it. The old Southern city was described

and the opinions of its residents in regard to the case given. It was there—clear, interesting, and strong. One could see it all as if every phase of it were being enacted before one's eyes. Skaggs surpassed himself.

When the editor first got hold of it he said, "Huh!" over the opening lines, a few short sentences that instantly pricked the attention awake. He read on with increasing interest. "This is good stuff," he said at the last page. "Here's a chance for the *Universe* to look into the methods of Southern court proceedings. Here's a chance for a spread."

The *Universe* had always claimed to be the friend of all poor and oppressed humanity, and every once in a while it did something to substantiate its claim, whereupon it stood off and said to the public, "Look you, what we have done, and behold how great we are, the friend of the people!" The *Universe* was yellow. It was very so. But it had power and keenness and energy. It never lost an opportunity to crow, and if one was not forthcoming, it made one. In this way it managed to do a considerable amount of good, and its yellowness became forgivable, even commendable. In Skaggs's story the editor saw an opportunity for one of its periodical philanthropies. He seized upon it. With head-lines that took half a page and with cuts authentic and otherwise, the tale was told, and the people of New York were greeted next morning with the announcement of

"A BURNING SHAME!

"A POOR AND INNOCENT NEGRO MADE TO SUFFER FOR A
RICH MAN'S CRIME!

"GREAT EXPOSÉ BY THE 'UNIVERSE!'

"A 'UNIVERSE' REPORTER TO THE RESCUE!

"THE WHOLE THING TO BE AIRED THAT THE PEOPLE MAY KNOW!"

Then Skaggs received a telegram that made him leap for joy. He was to do it. He was to go to the capital of the State. He was to beard the Governor in his den, and he, with the force of a great paper behind him, was to demand for the people the release of an innocent man. Then there would be another write-up and much glory for him and more shekels. In an hour after he had received his telegram he was on his way to the Southern capital.

Meanwhile in the house of Maurice Oakley there were sad times. From the moment that the master of the house had fallen to the floor in impotent fear and madness there had been no peace within his doors. At first his wife had tried to control him alone, and had humored the wild babblings with which he woke from his swoon. But these changed to shrieks and cries and curses, and she was forced to throw open the

doors so long closed and call in help. The neighbors and her old friends went to her assistance, and what the reporter's story had not done the ravings of the man accomplished, for, with a show of matchless cunning, he continually clutched at his breast, laughed, and babbled his secret openly. Even then they would have smothered it in silence for the honor of one of their best families; but too many ears had heard it, and then came the yellow journal bearing all the news in emblazoned head-lines.

Colonel Saunders was distinctly hurt to think that all his confidence had been imposed on and that he had been instrumental in bringing shame upon a Southern name.

"To think, suh," he said generally to the usual assembly of choice spirits,—“to think of that man's being a reporter, suh, a common, ordinary reporter, and that I sat and talked to him as if he were a gentleman!”

"You're not to be blamed, Colonel," said old Horace Talbot. "You've done no more than any other gentleman would have done. The trouble is that the average Northerner has no sense of honor, suh, no sense of honor. If this particular man had had, he would have kept still, and everything would have gone on smooth and quiet. Instead of that, a distinguished family is brought to shame, and for what? To give a nigger a few more years of freedom when, likely as not, he don't want it. Berry Hamilton's life in prison has proved nearer the ideal reached by slavery than anything he has found since emancipation. Why, suhs, I fancy I see him leaving his prison with tears of regret in his eyes."

Old Horace was inanely eloquent for an hour over his pet theory. But there were some in the town who thought differently about the matter, and it was their opinions and murmurings that backed up Skaggs and made it easier for him when at the capital he came into contact with the official red tape.

He was told that there were certain forms of procedure, and certain times for certain things, but he hammered persistently away, the murmurings behind him grew louder, while from his sanctum the editor of the *Universe* thundered away against oppression and high-handed tyranny. Other papers took it up and asked why this man should be despoiled of his liberty any longer? And when it was replied that the man had been convicted, and that the wheels of justice could not be stopped or turned back by the letter of a romantic artist or the ravings of a madman, there was a mighty outcry against the farce of justice that had been played out in this man's case.

The trial was reviewed; the evidence again brought up and examined. The dignity of the State was threatened. At this time the State did the one thing necessary to save its tottering reputation. It

would not surrender, but it capitulated, and Berry Hamilton was pardoned.

Berry heard the news with surprise and a half-bitter joy. He had long ago lost hope that justice would ever be done to him. He marvelled at the word that was brought to him now, and he could not understand the strange cordiality of the young white man who met him at the warden's office. Five years of prison life had made a different man of him. He no longer looked to receive kindness from his fellows, and he blinked at it as he blinked at the unwonted brightness of the sun. The lines about his mouth where the smiles used to gather had changed and grown stern with the hopelessness of years. His lips drooped pathetically, and hard treatment had given his eyes a lowering look. His hair, that had hardly shown a white streak, was as white as Maurice Oakley's own. His erstwhile quick wits were dulled and imbruted. He had lived like an ox, working without inspiration or reward, and he came forth like an ox from his stall. All the higher part of him he had left behind, dropping it off day after day through the wearisome years. He had put behind him the Berry Hamilton that laughed and joked and sang and believed, for even his faith had become only a numbed fancy.

"This is a very happy occasion, Mr. Hamilton," said Skaggs, shaking his hand heartily.

Berry did not answer. What had this slim, glib young man to do with him? What had any white man to do with him after what he had suffered at their hands?

"You know you are to go to New York with me?"

"To New Yawk? What fu'?"

Skaggs did not tell him that now the *Universe* had done its work, it demanded the right to crow to its heart's satisfaction. He said only, "You want to see your wife, of course?"

Berry had forgotten Fannie, and for the first time his heart thrilled within him at the thought of seeing her again.

"I ain't hyeahed f'om my people fu' a long time. I didn't know what had become of 'em. How's Kit an' Joe?"

"They're all right," was the reply. Skaggs couldn't tell him in this, the first hour of his freedom. Let him have time to drink the sweetness of that all in. There would be time afterwards to taste all of the bitterness.

Once in New York, he found that people wished to see him, some fools, some philanthropists, and a great many reporters; he had to be photographed—all this before he could seek those whom he longed to see. They printed his picture as he was before he went to prison and as he was now, a sort of before-and-after-taking comment, and in the morning that it all appeared, when the *Universe* spread itself to tell

the public what it had done and how it had done it, they gave him his wife's address.

XVIII.

WHAT BERRY FOUND.

HAD not Berry's years of prison life made him forget what little he knew of reading he might have read the name Gibson on the door-plate where they told him to ring for his wife. But he knew nothing of what awaited him as he confidently pulled the bell. Fannie, herself, came to the door. The news the papers held had not escaped her, but she had suffered in silence, hoping that Berry might be spared the pain of finding her. Now he stood before her, and she knew him at a glance in spite of his haggard countenance.

"Fannie," he said, holding out his arms to her, and all of the pain and pathos of long yearning was in his voice, "don't you know me?"

She shrank away from him, back in the hall-way.

"Yes, yes, Be'y, I knows you. Come in."

She led him through the passage-way and into her room, he following with a sudden sinking at his heart. This was not the reception he had expected from Fannie.

When they were within the room he turned and held out his arms to her again, but she did not notice them. "W'y, is you 'shamed o' me?" he asked brokenly.

"'Shamed? No! Oh Be'y," and she sank into a chair and began rocking to and fro in her helpless grief.

"What's de mattah, Fannie? Ain't you glad to see me?"

"Yes, yes, but you don't know nothin', do you? Dey lef' me to tell you?"

"Lef' you to tell me? What's de mattah? Is Joe or Kit daid? Tell me."

"No, not daid. Kit dances on de stage fu' a livin', an', Be'y, she ain't de gal she uset to be. Joe—Joe—Joe—he's in pen'tentiary fu' killin' a ooman."

Berry started forward with a cry, "My Gawd! my Gawd! my little gal! my boy!"

"Dat ain't all," she went on dully, as if reciting a rote lesson; "I ain't yo' wife no mo'. I's ma'ied ag'in. Oh Be'y, Be'y, don't look at me lak dat. I couldn't he'p it. Kit an' Joe lef' me, an' dey said de pen'tentiary divo'ced you an' me, and' dat you'd nevah come out nohow. Don't look at me lak dat, Be'y."

"You ain't my wife no mo'? Hit's a lie, a damn lie! You is my wife. I's a innocent man. No pen'tentiary kin tek you erway f'om me. Hit's enough what dey've done to my chillen." He rushed for-

ward and seized her by the arm. "Dey sha'n't do no mo', by Gawd! dey sha'n't, I say!" His voice had risen to a fierce roar, like that of a hurt beast, and he shook her by the arm as he spoke.

"Oh, don't, Be'y, don't, you hu't me. I couldn't he'p it."

He glared at her for a moment, and then the real force of the situation came full upon him, and he bowed his head in his hands and wept like a child. The great sobs came up and stuck in his throat.

She crept up to him fearfully and laid her hand on his head.

"Don't cry, Be'y," she said; "I done wrong, but I loves you yit."

He seized her in his arms and held her tightly until he could control himself. Then he asked weakly, "Well, what am I goin' to do?"

"I do' know, Be'y, 'ceptin' dat you'll have to leave me."

"I won't; I'll nevah leave you ag'in," he replied doggedly.

"But, Be'y, you mus'. You'll only mek it ha'der on me, an' Gib-son'll beat me ag'in."

"Ag'in!"

She hung her head. "Yes."

He gripped himself hard.

"W'y cain't you come on off wid me, Fannie? You was mine fus'."

"I couldn't. He would fin' me anywhaih I went to."

"Let him fin' you. You'll be wid me, an' we'll settle it, him an' me."

"I want to, but oh, I can't, I can't," she wailed. "Please go now, Be'y, befo' he gits home. He's mad anyhow, 'cause you're out."

Berry looked at her hard, and then said in a dry voice, "An' so I got to go an' leave you to him?"

"Yes, you mus'; I'm his'n now."

He turned to the door, murmuring "My wife gone, Kit a nobody, an' Joe, little Joe, a murderer, an' then I—I—uset to pray to Gawd an' call Him 'Ouah Fathah.'" He laughed hoarsely. It sounded like nothing Fannie had ever heard before.

"Don't, Be'y, don't say dat. Maybe we don't un'erstan'."

Her faith still hung by a slender thread, but his had given way in that moment.

"No, we don't un'erstan'," he laughed as he went out of the door. "We don't un'erstan'."

He staggered down the steps, blinded by his emotions, and set his face towards the little lodging that he had taken temporarily. There seemed nothing left in life for him to do. Yet he knew that he must work to live, although the effort seemed hardly worth while. He remembered now that the *Universe* had offered him the under-janitorship in its building. He would go and take it, and some day, per-

haps—— He was not quite sure what the perhaps meant. But as his mind grew clearer he came to know, for a sullen, fierce anger was smouldering in his heart against the man who through lies had stolen his wife from him. It was anger that came slowly, but gained in fierceness as it grew.

Yes, that was it, he would kill Gibson. It was no worse than his present state. Then it would be father and son murderers. They would hang him or send him back to prison. Neither would be hard now. He laughed to himself.

And this was what they had let him out of prison for?—To find out all of this. Why had they not left him there to die in ignorance? What had he to do with all these people who gave him sympathy? What did he want of their sympathy? Could they give him back one tithe of what he had lost? Could they restore to him his wife or his son or his daughter, his quiet happiness or his simple faith?

He went to work for the *Universe*, but night after night, armed, he patrolled the sidewalk in front of Fannie's house. He did not know Gibson, but he wanted to see them together. Then he would strike. His vigils kept him from his bed, but he went to work the next morning with no weariness. The hope of revenge sustained him, and he took a savage joy in the thought that he should be a dispenser of justice to at least one of those who had wounded him.

Finally he grew impatient and determined to wait no longer, but to seek his enemy in his own house. He approached the place cautiously and went up the steps. His hand touched the bell-pull. He staggered back.

"Oh my Gawd!" he said.

There was crape on Fannie's bell. His head went round and he held to the door for support. Then he turned the knob and the door opened. He went noiselessly in. At the door of Fannie's room he halted, sick with fear. He knocked. A step sounded within, and his wife's face looked out upon him. He could have screamed aloud with relief.

"It ain't you?" he whispered huskily.

"No, it's him. He was killed in a fight at the race-track. Some o' his friends are settin' up. Come in."

He went in, a wild, strange feeling surging at his heart. She showed him into the death-chamber.

As he stood and looked down upon the face of his enemy, still, cold, and terrible in death, the recognition of how near he had come to crime swept over him, and all his dead faith sprang into new life in a glorious resurrection. He stood with clasped hands, and no word passed his lips. But his heart was crying "Thank God! thank God! this man's blood is not on my hands."

The gamblers who were sitting up with the dead wondered who the old fool was who looked at their silent comrade and then raised his eyes as if in prayer.

When Gibson was laid away there were no formalities between Berry and his wife: they simply went back to each other. New York held nothing for them now but sad memories. Kit was on the road, and the father could not bear to see his son, so they turned their faces southward, back to the only place they could call home. Surely the people could not be cruel to them now, and even if they were, they felt that after what they had endured no wound had power to give them pain.

Leslie Oakley heard of their coming, and with her own hands reopened and refurnished the little cottage in the yard for them. There the white-haired woman begged them to spend the rest of their days and be in peace and comfort. It was the only amends she could make. As much to satisfy her as to settle themselves, they took the cottage, and many a night thereafter they sat together with clasped hands listening to the shrieks of the madman across the yard and thinking of what he had brought to them and to himself.

It was not a happy life, but it was all that was left to them, and they took it up without complaint, for they knew they were powerless against some will infinitely stronger than their own.



THE LOSS OF THE FIRST-BORN

BY MABEL THORNTON WHITMORE

I SAT and watched the barber's shears
Go snipping through my baby's curls,
And while I looked, swift sped the years.
As when a passing zephyr whirls
The pink-veined apple-blooms away,
Leaving exposed the budding fruit,
So tiny, yet a promise mute
Of harvest ripe some autumn day—
So, as the clustering ringlets fall,
My baby blossom droops and dies—
A sleek-haired laddie, grave and tall,
Kisses the tears from mother's eyes.

IN THE DRAGON'S GRIP

TWO INCIDENTS OF MISSIONARY LIFE IN CENTRAL CHINA

By Frederic Poole



A MOST serious question was being earnestly discussed by three solitary foreigners in the inland Chinese city of Teh Ngan, namely, the advisability of performing a surgical operation on a Chinese woman. Never before had such a thing been attempted in that part of China, and Dr. Morley, my wife, and myself were fully conscious of the tremendous risks involved.

The city was already in a state of feverish excitement, caused by the recent arrival of a new kind of "foreign devil," for my wife and I had but a few days before joined Dr. Morley, who alone for several years had held the fort in that notoriously anti-foreign city. It had never before been possible to attempt such an operation as that now contemplated, for it is against all Chinese ideas of propriety for a male physician to medically treat a woman in that strange land. But now that my wife, who was medically qualified, had arrived, this obstacle was removed, and the patient, who for years had suffered from a cancerous growth which threatened her life, was willing to place herself in the hands of the "foreign white woman."

We knew that our personal safety and possibly our lives depended on the success or failure of the operation, and that the undertaking would be in violent opposition to all the cherished ideas of the Chinese regarding the sacredness of the human body, which must "never be cut." But a woman's life was at stake, and the critical question was decided by the hopeful willingness of my wife to attempt the serious task.

Special precautions were taken to keep the event secret until the operation was completed, and it was therefore, in the hazy light of a summer's dawn, all attired in native dress in order to avoid attracting attention, accompanied by our faithful hospital attendant, Tsang, that we cautiously wended our way to the home of our waiting patient. At last the poor woman's cottage was reached, and we soon discovered that the contemplated surgical operation was destined to be unique in many respects.

There were urgent reasons for cautious speed in our movements, for we were fearful lest our mission to the cottage should become known before we had completed our task, the results of which none of us dared to contemplate.

Placing the suffering woman on a rudely constructed bamboo couch near the open door and facing the court-yard, in order to get the best light, with beating hearts and under high nervous tension we commenced the operation, so pregnant with the direst possibilities. While I administered the anæsthetic, the doctor and my wife proceeded to remove the cause of the woman's suffering, while the members of her family stood near by and with fearful and awestruck expressions gazed upon the ghastly scene.

We had just reached the crucial stage of the operation, the roots of the troublesome cancerous growth had been skilfully removed, gushing arteries were being deftly caught and ligated, and we were quietly congratulating ourselves that the terrible tension would soon be over, when we were startled by a terrified cry from Tsang, who watched by the gate, and who, with an expression of almost hopeless despair, exclaimed, "Teacher, there is a crowd of men coming up the street."

In some way our visit to the cottage had become known, and soon a horde of wildly gesticulating and excited Chinese traced their way to where we were. As they came nearer the sound of angry voices and fierce exclamations reached our ears, and we mutely looked at each other, for the situation was growing desperate and full of horror.

"What shall we do, Morley?" I cried to the Doctor.

"Finish this operation," he stoically replied.

And with pallid faces and set teeth we again bent over our task, which had well-nigh resulted fatally from the momentary cessation. Soon the sound of falling bricks told us that the mob outside was struggling for places of vantage on the compound wall, and looking up for a moment, we were horrified to see every available inch of the wall occupied by scores of Chinese, who stared aghast at what they saw, while five hundred more clamored in the street outside.

All that we had ever heard of or experienced in former Chinese anti-foreign riots vividly flashed before us in those few terrifying moments.

The task in which we were engaged, with all the paraphernalia incident to a hospital operating-theatre, the white-faced patient lying unconscious and to an uninitiated observer apparently dead, while around her couch stood three foreigners with blood-stained hands suggestive of some iniquitous bloody deed,—surely, here was a sight to verify all the rumors which had been widely circulated regarding the evil machinations of the hated "barbarian." Try as we would, we could think of no way of escape, and after hastily closing up the wound

and applying necessary bandages, we mutely faced that jeering, cursing crowd and waited for—the end.

In sheer desperation I called to Tsang and instructed him to tell the angry and bewildered mass of Chinese on the walls that the woman was not dead, as they supposed, and that if they would wait just where they were they would see the foreign woman bring their Chinese sister out of her sleep.

This appeal to their characteristic dread of the supernatural succeeded. With hawk-like intensity they watched us, while the Doctor and I withdrew from the woman's couch and my wife took charge of the patient, eager for favorable indications and doing all that she could to restore consciousness, for our salvation depended on this, and I knew that if this desirable end could be accomplished under the management of the "foreign woman" we might be able to use this fact as a means to secure more generous treatment.

The minutes passed like hours as we stood there and watched for signs that were to mean so much to us, for a fatal collapse would be our death-warrant. At last the fearful tension was broken by a sharp, suppressed, but joyful cry from my wife, "She is all right!" and as we bent forward we noticed the nervous quiver of the eyelids and a faint movement of the hand as it hung by the side of the couch.

Stimulants were quickly applied, and our efforts were more than compensated when the poor woman opened her eyes and gently turned her head towards the open door, while from the watching throng there arose a cry of astonishment and wonder, and we knew that the crisis was passed.

The feeling of gratitude and relief which immediately took possession of us, however, was speedily cut short by the sound of falling masonry and the crashing of the heavy compound gates, and in an instant the court-yard was jammed with a struggling, fighting mass of excited Chinese, all intent on getting a closer view of the little, pale-faced woman who had accomplished such a wonderful feat.

The sick woman was forgotten; the gory incidents of the operation seemed to have faded from their memory, as with one united cry they clamored to see the "foreign woman doctor." Any attempt to avoid their frenzied eagerness to see my wife would have been futile and possibly fatal, and, realizing that our safety depended on some instant action, we determined to make an effort to retrace our way to the hospital. Placing my wife between the Doctor and myself, we slowly pressed through the streets.

Battered and bruised by the impetuous crushing of the ever-increasing delirious crowds, we struggled along, clinging to each other's hands as we were swayed from one side of the street to the other, until we finally reached the hospital.

Our attendants quickly closed the heavy gates of the hospital compound on the yelling throng outside, and for the first time we experienced a sense of safety as we sank down on the floor of the dispensary utterly exhausted, while my wife, realizing that there was now no need of further mental or physical exertion, conscious only that she was safe, promptly fainted, and never was a woman more justified for indulging in that alleged "weakness" of the gentler sex.



China is a land of uncertainty, however, and the foreign resident in that land lives, as it were, on the edge of a slumbering volcano, in constant dread of an overwhelming eruption. We had scarcely recovered from the shock of this thrilling experience when we began to hear disquieting rumors of the Chinese having risen against the foreigners in other sections of the country. In one such outbreak a colleague had been foully murdered. The dangerous infection soon spread to the city in which we lived, and almost without warning the storm burst upon us in all its fury.

Experience had taught us to be prepared for just such emergencies, and the day before the maddened, hostile Chinese rabble attacked and ultimately destroyed our home, my wife and I, aided by one or two friendly Chinese, had quietly left the city and travelled several miles across an arid plain until we reached the river, when we boarded a small native boat which for several days had been kept in readiness for this contingency. Then began a heart-breaking and never-to-be-forgotten journey of ten days, days full of unspeakable terror, for we were constantly in danger of discovery and attack, which we knew would mean torture and death.

With my two servants and crew, we were hourly on the alert, and succeeded in escaping detection during the first six days of our journey; when, with our haven of safety but three or four days distant, we had an experience which surely can come but once in a lifetime.

We had reached the outskirts of a well-populated town, and in order to avoid observation we had tied our boat up some distance from the regular boat anchorage. With tropical rapidity, twilight was fast merging into an unusually brilliant moonlit night, in which our every movement was clearly visible. This feature worried us considerably, and we prayed and longed for darkness, yet that luminous orb was eventually destined to work out our salvation.

Suddenly, about midnight, we were startled from our restless slumber by the crashing of some heavy object against the side of our boat, and, seizing my revolver, I sprang on deck, only to find that a belated rice-boat, manned by a drowsy crew, had been allowed to drift down the stream and struck us as we lay hidden beneath the shade of the

trees that jutted out from the embankment. Instantly all was confusion, the crews of the boats bitterly denouncing each other, until I succeeded in separating the belligerents and induced the crew of our unwelcome visitor to continue on their way down the river.

There was no more sleep for us that night. Our secret was out. I had been recognized as a "foreign devil," and my worst fears were soon realized.

With a heavy heart I began to prepare for the conflict that I knew must soon come. Pulling our boat into the middle of the river, we dropped our anchor and—waited.

Scarcely had the anchor gone overboard, when the yelling of scores of natives told us that the alarm had been given and the hunt for the hated foreigners had begun.

Clearly outlined in the bright light of the moon, our little craft was speedily discovered, and with curses and shouts of exultation the natives in a delirious frenzy swarmed down the embankment and threatened us with all manner of torture and death. Terrified to the point of distraction, my captain and crew huddled, helpless, in the rear part of the boat, and my two servants were sobbing pitifully near our cabin door, believing that the end had come, while my wife, nervous and trembling, clung to me in desperation and begged me not to leave her.

It was a time for quick action, for the natives were already wading into the water and stealthily creeping towards our boat. I comforted my wife with the assurance that she should not die at *their* hands if it came to the worst, and she slightly shuddered as she glanced at my revolver and tearfully smiled assent to the arrangement we had both already agreed upon, for we knew what it would mean if she should fall into the hands of that devil-possessed mob. One chamber of my revolver was always left loaded in *reserve* for that awful contingency.

With a boldness inspired by sheer despair, I went on deck and appealed to that frantic gathering not to molest us. I might as well have addressed the Great Wall of China. A shower of stones was the only response, shattering the side of our boat, and an affrighted cry from my servants and a suppressed scream from my wife recalled me to my senses, for I had been almost stunned by a well-directed missile.

Steadying myself, I fired two shots into the air, which had the result of checking their assault, but finding that no one had been hurt, and maddened now by my resistance, they returned to the attack and endeavored to wreck our little craft.

"Look, master, look," cried my servant, and hastily glancing round I saw a flat-bottomed ferry-boat coming up the stream laden with over a dozen variously armed half-naked natives. In a few minutes we should be hemmed in, and, giving up all hope, I was about to enter

our little cabin to perform an act of mercy and then await my own fate, when I was halted by the consciousness that it was getting gradually but perceptibly darker. It was unaccountable, and for a moment I feared that I was losing my grip on my self-possession.

I looked up, but the sky was cloudless, and through the clear atmosphere the stars sparkled like diamonds.

Casting my eyes across that dark-blue expanse, my attention was arrested by the fact that the moon had assumed a most peculiar shape, and while this all happened in less time than it takes to tell, yet I distinctly remember the sense of perplexity which this celestial phenomenon produced.

The sensation was brief, and was succeeded by a positive certainty. It was an Eclipse, thank God! and in this I saw a glimmer of hope.

I knew with what suspicious dread the Chinese regard a lunar eclipse, and I determined to work upon that well-grounded fear. Stepping forward to the prow of our boat, revolver in hand, I raised my hands to heaven and fired two shots at the moon, and with a hysterical laugh I cried,—

“Look! look there!”

Involuntarily every face was uplifted. The effect was magical. The shouting ceased, the stones dropped from their hands, and an awesome fear took possession of them. Already the spectacle had been observed by the inhabitants of the town, and the very dogs were responding to their peculiar canine instinct and were furiously barking in harmony with the general consternation. Gongs were being beaten, fire-crackers exploded, and drums of every description belabored with the belief that is universal among the Chinese that it is only noise, and plenty of it, that will frighten away the “dragon that is consuming the moon.” The deafening din is kept up until the eclipse has passed, and the natives are jubilant in the conviction that they have succeeded in scaring the rapacious monster away, and under such circumstances who could prove to them that they had not?

This was the sight that paralyzed our tormentors, and with terrified haste they slunk away to join the anti-dragon demonstration in the town, while I still remained motionless, with my glistening revolver menacing the moon; and that perfectly natural phenomenon in the heavens, so awe-inspiring to the Chinese, is undoubtedly attributed to me and my noisy revolver to this day by the inhabitants of that inhospitable Chinese town.

We immediately took advantage of the darkness and the demoralization it had produced, and, cutting away our anchor, we slipped down the river, rowing for dear life, as it were, from the very jaws of death, until the dawn of another day brought us into a broader expanse of water and comparative safety.

After two more days of heart-breaking labor our eyes were gladdened by the sight of the towering walls of the great city of Hankow, and sweeping out of the Han River into the mighty Yang-tse-Kiang, we made straight for the American gun-boat which rested like a guardian angel before that great heathen city. Here, under the glorious Stars and Stripes, we were safe, but for one of us the worst was yet to come.

Physically exhausted and utterly prostrated by the terrible and constant suspense and the fearful ordeal through which she had passed, the brave little woman who had endured so much gradually succumbed, and soon after our arrival in Hankow the little "God's acre" in that city, so dearly cherished by its foreign residents, became to me doubly consecrated as a newly made mound indicated that another life had been surrendered in the effort to elevate and bless humanity.

CHINESE SIGNATURE OF MR. POOLE



THE TWO BROTHERS

BY C. W. DOYLE, M.D.

THIS is Oblivion's throne. Upon its seat
 Death clasps his younger brother, laying his face
 Ringed with dark curls against Sleep's fairer grace.
 Ye weary ones, is Sleep or Death more sweet?
 Sleep opes his eyes the wan pale light to greet
 That hales his dark bride, Night, from his embrace;
 His warm desires the halting hours outpace
 Till he shall smite her palms and kiss her feet.
 But in those hours what toil! His brother, Death,
 Salutes for all time his sweet consort, Rest;
 Sleep's bride is fickle—gone with morning's breath:
 Death leans forever on a faithful breast.
 Sleep babbles lies in dreams: whilst Death, forsooth,
 Shuts close his lips and ever guards the truth.

THE HEAD MARSHAL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

By James Weber Linn



FIFTH IN THE SERIES OF COLLEGE TALES

BEFORE the game ended the busy sun had travelled so far westward that the shadow of the grand-stand lay over the whole diamond. Chicago had won in the eleventh inning. The enthusiasm, however, was repressed and decorous. A base-ball game fails to inspire in the spectators any such nervous eagerness as you see in November foot-ball, when young women will clutch total strangers by the arm and demand to know who has the ball; and the stranger, in spite of Western gallantry, will squirm heedlessly, intent on the struggle before him. "Pop" Claflin, who in return for some thousands of dollars a year instructed youths and maidens in sociological principles, and then frowned heavily when they put those principles into practice,—Pop continued to eat peanuts mechanically while he added up his score.

"Watch him," said young Darlington eagerly. "That's his third bag." Ada Langley nodded with some languor. She had studied under Pop while young Darlington was in the grades,—a fact that a number of the spectators commented on.

"There goes Ada with her last freshman," said one. "How does she catch them, I wonder."

"Puts salt on their tails, I suppose," answered his friend. "How did she catch you, Buck? If I remember rightly, you used to be very steady in that quarter. It comes like the measles and teething."

The crowd moved out steadily and slowly. Nobody is in a hurry after a base-ball game. The spring is full of lazy suggestiveness; the sun invites to meditation and lagging steps. By the time young Darlington and Miss Langley had reached the stairs the diamond was quite deserted.

"Who is that going down ahead of us?" asked Miss Langley suddenly,— "the tall man with the 'varsity cap on?"

Darlington craned his neck. "What, Blake?" he demanded, surprised. "Don't you know him?"

"I thought it was he," admitted Miss Langley. "But he seems to have changed a good deal, some way."

The Head Marshal of Chicago University 603

"That's Miss Norton with him," Darlington informed her,—“his latest smit. He has it very bad, they say.”

"Who is she? She doesn't seem very pretty to me."

"She's a Kansas City girl. Do you know the McRaes, here in Kenwood? Sort of a cousin of theirs, I believe, though she lives out here on the campus—in Beecher. Scotch, aren't they? She's only been here since the first of last January, but she's made a dreadful tear."

"I haven't seen her at any of the dances," said Miss Langley doubtfully.

"No; her mother thinks she's too young or something. But she's old enough for Blake. They're round with each other all the time. One of the buttresses on the south end of Haskell we call 'Blake's Corner' because he's always there with her, watching the divinity students play tennis."

Miss Langley nodded again. She too—though she omitted to mention it—had sat in Blake's corner. She was a junior when he was a freshman, she remembered; or, rather, she knew—it was too present in her mind to call a recollection. Keen-faced, light-limbed, he had been even as a freshman. Now he was a junior. Of all Ada Langley's "affairs"—and the current report was that at one time she had kept a private stenographer to attend to her correspondence—she recalled that one with the greatest distinctness of detail.

"Norton?" she questioned. "What is it about her that made the 'tear'?"

"Oh, I don't know," young Darlington hesitated. "I don't see much in her. She seems pretty *young* to me—hasn't got anything to talk about, you know." Sweetly unconscious of the stab he had planted in the breast of Ada Langley, he pursued: "Funny how some men succeed, isn't it? Now, take that man Blake; he was president of the three-quarters club and made the 'varsity his freshman year; sings on the glee-club and plays on the dramatic club; he was chairman of the Prom. this year, and they say he's going to be head marshal. He's got about everything in sight, Blake." Miss Langley assented unconsciously; perhaps she was still thinking of Blake's corner.

Others spoke of Blake as they loitered out. Redda Trumbull, walking with his arm over Brierley's shoulder, looked after him and sighed.

"Toin," he said, "aren't you sorry for that man Blake?"

"Why?" asked Brierley wonderingly.

"Well," Redda admitted, "in some ways he's fortunate enough. He's got plenty of medals. But it always seems to me as though he'd started to run a mile and pumped himself on the first quarter. He surely did sprint there."

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"Well, that's something," returned Brierley. "Some fellows never even show."

"I'd rather hit a decent pace and finish," said Redda, "than lead for awhile and then drop out—blow up. I never can get rid of the feeling that Blake has blown up. How many good friends has he got?"

"Mighty few, I guess," Brierley conceded. "I wouldn't trust him as far as I could throw a barn. But I guess his little friend there would."

"What is it about him, Tom?" Redda insisted. "Nearly everybody feels it, someway. You admit that he's clever and all that, but you don't want to get close to him."

Brierley hesitated a moment. "I guess," he said finally, "if you called it selfishness you'd come close enough for all practical purposes. When you look out for number one you generally succeed well enough—for a while."

Meantime Blake and Miss Norton loitered on the way to Beecher. He had been telling her of his hopes for the head-marshalship, while she listened gravely. She was a grave little thing at most times; even when she was most amused she smiled instead of laughing. But her hair was so light and straight she could not keep it decorously behind her ears, as she would have liked, and was forced to let it blow about and drift across her cheeks, and the disorder of it softened her gravity. She listened to Blake intently but seriously.

"Do you really want the head-marshalship very much, Mr. Blake?"

"Yes," he answered, "I really want it very much."

"Why do you care?"

Blake, taken a little aback, pondered. "Well," he said, "the head-marshalship means about as much as any honor that a fellow can get here, and I've always taken the position that a fellow should try for honors. It means that he is popular and a good executive,—you know he has entire control of the details of the convocations,—and it means that he leaves well recommended by the President, and that is something to a poor man like me. If when I leave the University I leave it head marshal, I can almost certainly get a position somewhere—a position such as I should like, I mean. The office is a kind of official seal they put on you—'these goods examined and approved,' you know, like proof spirits or Armour's hams."

"Then, of course," she replied, "I hope you will get it. I shouldn't like you to be disappointed. But I hope you won't feel very badly if you miss it."

"Why do you think I shall miss it?" he wondered.

"Oh, I don't. I only said *if* you did."

He brooded over her words as he left her and strode across the quadrangle. So much of his time was brooding and day-dreaming now

that he seldom found room for study. He confessed to himself with a sigh that the dreams were not all pleasant ones. He seemed to be losing his hold on affairs, and yet he could not tell why. Only a month before, in an election for councillor of his division, he had been defeated by Tom Brierley, a fellow he had always secretly despised. Brierley laughed when the result was announced, saying, "Have I actually beaten you out for something, Horace? That's a joke. That ought to be sent to *Life*." But the speech failed to soothe Blake's jangling nerves. In some moods he admitted to himself that he expected nothing but defeat now in whatever he attempted, though the admission always put him into a passion of self-analysis, searching for reasons. Sometimes he argued that the half-hearted support he received rose only from envy. A college is full of little men who go about, eyes close to the ground, examining all the idols for clay feet. Again he fancied it was he who was half-hearted, surfeited with his honors, tired of attracting attention; but he spurned the fancy with a bitter laugh. He knew better. He knew how he wanted the head-marshalship.

Seeing that it was dinner-time, he made his way to the fraternity house and took his place at the table. Gorringer, who was playing freeze-out, his left hand against his right, called to him from the next room,—

"Oh Horace!"

"What is it?"

"You cut Papa's sociology to-day, didn't you?"

"Yes; did anything happen?"

"Much. Papa announced a paper to close the course with—three thousand words."

"Three thousand devils!"

"Not exactly—though that's undoubtedly a word. But he wants them sociological words, not theological." Gorringer abandoned his game and came into the dining-room. "Funny thing," he said. "When I play cards against myself I always cheat,—it seems as though I did it unconsciously,—and yet I think I'm honest enough with other people. I wonder if that wouldn't do for a subject for Papa's thesis: 'Honesty: Is it a Sociological or a Moral Attribute?'"

"What subject *did* he assign?" demanded Blake.

"Oh, he didn't say; just so it's on the matter he's covered in the course. Billy Baxter asked him if he might write on 'Love as a Civilizing Instinct,' and Papa said, 'Certainly, Mr. Baxter; all I insist is that the subject shall be thoroughly understood.'"

"When is the thesis due?"

"A month from Monday—that is the 16th of June. The thesis is the only examination Papa intends to give, he says."

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"A month, eh? Well, I suppose I can knock him out something," meditated Blake. "Seems to me they're rather piling it on this quarter, though."

"Are you going down-town to-night, Horace?" asked Gorringe. "I've a spare ticket for Anna Held, if you care to come."

"Sorry, but I can't; I'm due elsewhere at eight. Give the lady my love."

"Pop" Claffin's thesis, thus announced, hung heavily on Blake's mind for some days. Perfectly conscious that he could achieve some distinction by it if he tried, and at the same time aware that if he meant to satisfy the finicky "Pop" and get credit for the course he must needs try, he determined to find a subject which should do his ability justice. He felt that to a considerable extent this thesis would help him or hinder in the effort for the head-marshalship. To fail would put him absolutely out of consideration, for no one could hold University honors if he were conditioned in any study. Such a failure was out of the question. But, on the other hand, a distinguished success, coming at just the right moment, as this would come, might assist his chances greatly. What chafed Blake was the fact that he could do nothing directly to help himself to the honor he wanted. If it were only an elective place! But the power to appoint lay wholly in the hands of the President, and Blake could hardly go to the President and urge his claims for the position. Through a member of the University Council, who occasionally remembered that they were both Chi Deltas, Blake knew that he was being considered by the President for the place. There his knowledge stopped.

"What should you think, Elsie, of sending the President a memorial setting out my qualifications, actual and potential?" he questioned, half seriously, as he lay staring up at the blue sky above the Wooded Island. "Oh, I'm in earnest," he added, as she smiled. "This suspense is killing me. Not that I care for myself, of course; but if the Prex should make a mistake, and the University go to the dogs in consequence, how should I feel if I thought I hadn't done everything possible?"

Many of these days of May and early June they spent together, Blake and Miss Norton, till he began to miss her if twenty-four hours went by and he had not seen her. She was so different, he thought—different from Ada Langley, for example, who had nicknamed him Buddy and helped him consider the question whether, after all, a sloe gin fizz is not a better appetizer than a vermouth cocktail. Miss Norton would not call him anything but Mr. Blake, though she answered readily enough to his Elsie. He did not talk to her of vermouth; he would not if he had thought of it, and he never did. She listened to his questionings and speculations with her grave little smile, and when

he asked her point-blank what she thought of this or that, answered with such earnestness and simplicity and sincerity that at first he was amused and then fascinated and then ashamed. When a man in the company of any girl feels his own unworthiness, he is at the beginning of love; when he feels his own superiority, he may be pleased at the moment, but afterwards he distrusts the girl. Blake did not know he was at the beginning of love. He had been interested in so many girls that he fancied he could never be more than interested in any.

It was Gorringer again who recalled to Blake the thesis in sociology. Papa Clafin's class met from two until three, and Blake was not often able to be present, especially since Papa had the idea that a roll-call was a nuisance and insulting to the intelligence of University men and women. Blake's resolutions slept, therefore, and it was not until Gorringer happened to say one night, "Only a week more of Papa's drool, thank God!" that they opened their eyes wide again.

"What day of the month is it that thesis is due, Gorrry?" he asked casually.

"The seventeenth. To-day's the twelfth. How's 'Grabbing as a Fine Art' coming on?" That was Gorringer's suggestion for Blake's thesis. "You ought to know a whole lot on that point," he insisted. "As for me, I'm going to give him a whirl on 'The Results of Living According to the Rules Laid Down in the Beatitudes. Being a Personal Experience of the Author.'"

"Pretty well," Blake answered his question. But he swore as he walked to his room. Not a word of his thesis was written, and it was due in a week.

When he reached his room he lit the gas and then flung himself savagely upon his couch. The flame tittered and shivered, and the shadows wavered and trembled on the walls, till the pictures moved and smiled at him mockingly. There were many of them—framed photographs, some signed, usually in a flaring school-girl hand, and some staring out anonymously. They were all of girls—girls whom Blake had known once. Now and then the thought occurred to him that of all these girls hardly one called him friend now, and sometimes he laughed over that and sometimes he did not. So he looked at them now, but he got no help from them. For a long time he lay there thinking. At last he rose, and, hunting through his book-case, pulled out a thin volume in solid but faded binding. Taking it to his table, under the student lamp, he turned out the flickering gas again, eclipsing all the mocking smiles, and began to look the volume over. Presently he pushed it aside petulantly and seized a sheet of blank paper.

"Thesis for Advanced Sociology," he wrote at the top, with the date. He chewed the top of his pencil. "On the Development of

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Centres of Commerce," he added; then he reflected that he had used that before in a previous class. No other subject occurred to him, and he seemed unable to pin his thoughts to anything.

"D——n it all!" he cried at last, "*I* don't know what the class has been studying about. What's the difference, anyway?" He pulled out the little volume and fell to studying it once more. Somebody knocked.

"Keep out, confound it!" shouted Blake, thrusting the book into a drawer. The door opened quickly and Gorringe entered.

"Hello, Horace. I won't stay a minute if you're busy. Just give me your 'American Commonwealth,' will you? Mine's missing somewhere, and I've got to have one to-night to finish Papa off. How are you getting on?"

Blake shut his mouth; then he laughed. "I'm all done but the copying," he said. Then, throwing the sheet into the waste-basket, he took up another and wrote at the top once more, "Thesis for Advanced Sociology. On Gambling as a Social Instinct. By Horace Blake."

"When the dickens you get time to do so much work beats me," quoth Gorringe, rising from the book-case.

Blake laughed again. "The result of system," he answered lightly. "Throw the catch as you go out, will you, Gorry? I don't want to be bothered for a while."

The speculation over the head-marshalship was brisk in the next week. Junior College Day, when the afternoon receptions in the quadrangles, after the dramatics and before the dance, give everyone a chance to gossip and criticise—on Junior College Day it was generally agreed that Blake would get the appointment. It was said that Tom Brierley was also being considered by the President; and it was strange to hear the groups murmur hopefully, "Oh, is that so?" and then resignedly, "But I don't believe he has a chance." Now and then some girl in white or pink or blue, serving ices on behalf of Kelly Hall or Foster Hall or Green Hall, each of which, it is said on good authority, is the home of the prettiest young women in the University, would pronounce a final verdict.

"Well, *I* think"—and the listeners, if they were undergraduates, would listen respectfully, and if they were members of the faculty would smile amusedly, and then all begin to say at once what they thought. The sun fell so low that the pinnacle of Cobb sparkled black in front of it, like jet carefully carved; and all the west windows in Kelly and Green and Beecher seemed to be splashed with blood. When Blake and Miss Norton appeared, just after six, many of the guests had gone to dine and prepare for the dance, but the grass under the trees was still alive with them, eating busily and talking when they had time. Blake and Miss Norton walked past, and at Kelly Hall she

turned in abruptly. He lifted his hat and bowed almost as if he were mocking her. Then he strode away.

"Horace Blake never could conceal his vanity," said someone. "See how he carried himself because he fancies we are looking."

"So we are," added another somebody, a girl this time. "So we always do. We look at him and we think about him and we abuse him. From all of which I judge that he has reached a pinnacle of greatness."

Presently the sun had slid so far down that Cobb was gray again, and the maids from the girls' dormitories began to carry in the tables; those few who had been asked to dine at the halls were led away looking as pleased as possible under the circumstances; and the quadrangles settled down to await the coming of the first carriage for the dance. The circle before the halls was thick with carriages when Blake arrived. The hall-doors opened now and then and two or four people—usually four—would come running down the steps, the lucky coachman would hold up his hand and drive away with his load, and the rest would settle down to wait again. When by edict of the authorities a dance commences at half-past eight, and by the same authorities' edict dinner is not served until half-past six, there is a good deal of hurry inside and of delay without. But they get away finally, and if she is popular, her card is filled, no matter how late she may be, and if she is not popular, the tardy arrival offers a good excuse to give herself for the blank dances, and so she is happier than she would be if she had no excuse at all. Blake and Miss Norton and Gorringer and some girl from Aurora, who was not remarkable in any way, except that her father was president of a corporation that Gorringer hoped to be interested in after he was graduated, reached the dance finally. The conversation in the carriage was confined to Gorringer and the girl from Aurora, who talked with easy stiffness about Art. The great trouble with that girl, Gorringer always said, was not that she talked about Art on the way to the dance, for that was quite right and proper, but that she insisted on talking about it on the way home, when it may have been proper enough but was chilly.

Blake and Miss Norton danced together several times, but always silently. As he looked down at her, so small and sweet, his ill-humor almost slipped away from him. But it was not until supper-time, when he secured a table for them alone, that he apologized for being rude in the afternoon.

"I am sorry," he said penitently. "Elsie, I am awfully sorry. But if you knew how I'm knocked out, you might forgive me."

"Yes," she said, "if I knew, I might forgive you."

He shook his head. "Can't you do it on trust?" he pleaded. "There are all sorts of things—but I can't say what."

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"I think perhaps I can do it on trust," she admitted finally. But still his face did not clear.

"I got a message from the President to-day," he said. "He wants to see me to-morrow."

"About the marshalship?"

"I don't know; he doesn't say; but I suppose it must be that."

Her face brightened. "That means the place goes to you, doesn't it?"

He nodded. "Unless he wants to see me about something else," he added moodily.

"What else could it be?"

"Well," he suggested, "it might be any one of my numerous misdeeds. But let us hope not." She smiled at him silently, and he broke into a laugh.

"Look at young Darlington," he said. "He's qualifying for admission to the Silly Club."

"I hope—I hope you get the marshalship," she insisted. "It is the highest honor? Let me drink a toast—the honor to the honorable." She smiled at him again. He pushed back his chair quickly.

"Come," he said, "they are all going in."

Blake slept very little after the dance was over. The dawn was in his room when he arrived, and the photographs were faded and pale. He drew down the curtains and went to bed, to consider a point that troubled him.

What did the President want of him? Was it the head-marshalship or—something else? His thesis had been in Clafin's hands now for three days, but he had heard no word from it, and the responsibility weighed on him. If Clafin by any chance should have discovered—but in that case Clafin would deal with him directly, not through the President. This thought was uppermost in his mind; and yet he had an uneasy apprehension too. This apprehension annoyed him. To be *caught* in unfair dealing was repugnant to every fibre of him. Yet the point that troubled him did not lie here: it was a point of conscience.

Horace Blake had lived at college very much as other men lived. He took the helps that came his way and was thankful; and although when he meditated he admitted to himself that a pure sentiment would condemn some of those helps, he excused himself on the ground that he was no Pharisee. Now he stood face to face with sentiment, and the condemnation disgusted him. He told himself once more that he was no Pharisee, and shut his eyes—perhaps to keep out the vision of a girl, with straight hair that would not stay in place, who smiled at him and said, "The honor to the honorable." For he knew that he was not "the honorable."

He saw the President that afternoon. The President was sturdy,

though not tall; rather eager, almost inquisitive, in his look; alternately attentive and absent-minded. He motioned Blake to a chair; then he began to speak in a quick, bright voice, with a staccato intonation and a bird-like movement of his head.

"You are a junior, Mr. Blake?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah!" The word was placid, contented—as though the President had feared to find himself mistaken. But presently he continued, and his words showed that he knew to whom he was speaking.

"Yes, you have been here three years. You and I have not seen much of each other, Mr. Blake." He paused and smiled. "Well, perhaps it is as well, in one way. I don't like to see the young men I am interested in here too often; and I have been interested in you." He paused again and looked out of the window.

"Yes, I have been interested in you. We have a great responsibility here—a great responsibility. We are on trial. The people are watching us—I can feel them watching me. Sometimes, when I should like to say something or do something, I stop and think—is this fair to the University? Am I doing this to the welfare of the University? And then, sometimes, I—don't do it."

He seemed to wait for Blake to speak, but the latter remained silent. The President meditated on—he seemed to be thinking aloud, as was his habit.

"So they watch us all—not in any hostile fashion, but very closely. They say, 'You must prove yourselves; you must quit yourselves like men.' And we are doing it." His eyes, large, noticeable, flashed; he nodded his head. "We are making our place. And when I see anyone who works harder than the rest, who is keen for advancement, who holds up the flag, I am interested in him—interested. I want to reward him." He fell silent again.

"But first," he continued at last, "I ask myself, What is he doing this for? What are his motives? What are his ideals? Does he strive honorably? I ask, and I find out. And if he strives honorably—then, Mr. Blake, I believe in that man; I put my faith in him; I do for him all I can." The President wheeled from the window and fastened his eager look on Blake's face.

"And so I have seen you striving," he declared, "and so I determined to put my faith in you." He picked up from his desk a slender wand of ebony tipped with gold. "Here is the head marshal's wand," he said. "The man who receives this, receives into his charge the credit of the University. Not"—and he held up his hand,—“not that its possession carries any power. Indeed, it entails a certain amount of simple drudgery. You know the duties of the head marshal probably as well as I. But it is the highest appointive honor that the

University has power to confer on an undergraduate. I give it to a man, and in doing so I say to the world, 'Here is the sort of man we believe in. Here is the man whom we will have to represent us. Here is the man by whom you may judge us.' Some days ago, Mr. Blake, I determined to give this wand to you."

Blake rose, interrupting.

"Sir," he answered, and his voice wavered—"Sir—I——" He passed his tongue over his lips again and again. Then he said in a low voice,—

"I can't take it."

"Can't?" The President's eager look was full upon him now.

"No, sir. 'The honor to the honorable'—I can't take it. If—if everything were known, you would not give it to me."

"Sit down." The President half rose. "If what were known?"

"Some time ago," said Blake miserably, "we were told by Professor Claflin to write a paper in Sociology. Credit for the course depended on it. I delayed in writing mine, and finally copied it from an old book I have—one I picked up in a little shop down-town. It was on 'Gambling as a Social Instinct.' I will get you the book."

"Is this it?" asked the President softly, taking a thin volume from beneath a pile of papers. Blake started, but the President's hand was on his knee gently. "Sit still. My boy, I could not believe that I had been *completely* mistaken in you."

Young Darlington, strolling with Miss Langley, full of the knowledge that he had emerged from his freshman year, made himself very entertaining over the convocation exercises as the sober procession filed by, gowned in black.

"Tom Brierley doing high steps in front," he remarked, "like the drum-major of the Undertaker's Band. If he knew how surprised people were that he got the head-marshalship, he wouldn't throw his feet so airily. Horace Blake ought to have had it, everybody knows. But nobody can tell what Prexy will do; he sits in his office and tries to think up schemes to make folks notice him."



MASTS IN HARBOR

BY EDITH M. THOMAS

LIKE some bare, silent, winter-compassed grove,
A little time the harbor-side they line:
To-morrow hence, and wide apart, they rove,
These long-dismantled shafts of wandering pine.

EVERY-DAY SUPERSTITIONS

By Charles M. Skinner

Author of "Myths and Legends of Our Own Land," etc.



NO class or creed is free from bugaboos, and the more impossible they are the more firmly they are believed. The wise make light of them, even when they affect their conduct, while the wiser and less wise own up frankly when they know that others know they are afraid. The wife of a man of wealth and consequence in my town, herself a woman of the best breeding, kindly, intelligent, member of the brightest society, president of a club of progressive women, has not a touch of psychological ailment save one: If she is about to leave her house and forgets something, she will re-enter her parlor and sit on a chair for a second or two. Were she to go back, get her umbrella, or whatever it might be, and descend into the street again without observing this form of seating herself, she would have bad luck. At the other end of the social scale from hers we find the foremast hand in the merchant service, illiterate, brawny, reckless, who is in a blue funk if he hears that a parson is a passenger on his ship, or that a corpse is to go in the hold as freight. The first time I went to sea I was whistling blithely one day, for the sun was bright and the breeze was fresh and the tub was spanking along under all her canvas, when a sailor warned me to stop. I asked why. He said the wind was coming up fast enough as it was, and if I kept on whistling I would be fetching a gale about their ears. Afterwards I learned that it is permissible to whistle during a calm,—and, indeed, I have known captains and mates to turn towards the quarter from which they wished the wind to spring and whistle for some minutes,—but it is against all custom to whistle when the wind is rising, for that is notice to Davy Jones that you want more, and he may turn on a hurricane.

Next to sailors and gamblers, the stage people are possibly the most frequent victims of invented terrors, and to record all the things that bring ill-fortune, and to believe in them, is to strain memory and faith. To sit on the curtain-roller between the acts is almost as deadly as monkeying with the buzz-saw. It came near to being so in the case of one visitor whose coat-tails were caught in it as it began to ascend, and who exhibited to a bewildered audience the vision of a pair of struggling legs and dangling arms as preface to a more ro-

mantic scene. An open umbrella on the stage evokes shrieks of dismay, yet one of the longest runs credited to any play in this country was achieved in despite of an open umbrella carried by the comedian. When "A Midsummer Night's Dream" was in rehearsal at Daly's Theatre, some years ago, the company had assembled several times at the table in the last act before anyone noticed that thirteen were seated. The actor who made this alarming discovery, and who passes for a hard-headed, unemotional man, became grave. "Why, we're thirteen at table!" he exclaimed. "Have in one of the carpenters or somebody." And a supe or a mechanic had to leave his place and employment and sit with Mr. Drew and Miss Rehan. The lower in the art one goes, the more avowed are these beliefs, and on the variety stage there are singers and dancers who count themselves among the hoodooed unless they can appear at the right second entrance or make their exit through a pair of curtains or have a clock on the mantel during their act.

Possibly the objection to crossing a street while a funeral procession is passing had its origin in a respect for the mourners; but when it is Mr. Lemuel Houlihan, the hod-carrier, who occupies the coffin, we must doubt the uniformity of woe prevailing in the fifty carriages that follow him to his resting-place; hence a business urgency or an appetite often impels the uninterested citizen to run between the carriages. As to the effect of spilt salt on one's personal fortunes, it is not so easy to account for, nor is it possible to guess why the evil should be averted by tossing a pinch of salt over one's right shoulder. There is in primitive beliefs and savage practices a relation between myths and medicine, and salt may have been a part of the *materia medica* at the time when Asian physicians were drying tigers' livers to cure rheumatisms withal. That Judas was the thirteenth man at the table does not explain the thirteen superstition, because he was not the thirteenth any more than was Peter or Paul, and his spilling salt at the last supper was an accident that, if it happened at all, might have occurred at a hundred suppers before. Maybe the objection to the loss of it goes back to some remote time and inland country where salt was so prized and rare that for a child to spill it was to secure a spanking. Another belief dates more definitely from the time of the crucifixion. It is that the cross of Christ was hewn from an aspen, and that in consequence of the part it was forced to play in the scene on Calvary the aspen's leaves have trembled ever since.

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There is one superstition of wide range and influence that is directed against one of the most beautiful objects in nature, the opal. A man in my town failed in business, and what do you think he did?

Took his opal ring into the yard and smashed it to pieces with a hammer! He did that in the nineteenth century! He ascribed his bankruptcy to that opal, and he intended neither to suffer such misfortune again nor to allow any other one to do so by inheriting or buying that ill-starred property. There is a reason for the baneful repute of this gem, or, at least, as much of a reason as you ever find for a belief like this, because reason and superstition are hopelessly at odds. Two or three centuries ago the stone was popular in Europe, and the jewellers of Italy were especially cunning in its setting. At the height of its popularity came the plague, which made havoc in Venice. It was noticed by some observant person in that city that when a victim was at the point of death his opal, if he wore one, brightened, while after death it became dull. As this accession of brilliance implied a sort of malignant purpose or intelligence in the stone, it was charged with the death of its owner. It never occurred to the scientists of that time to turn the incident around the other way, and see if the patient had anything to do with the opal. But that was the way of it: the heightened fever, just before death, caused the stone to become more brilliant, and the chill and damp afterwards dulled it. The stone is affected by heat,—that is, some specimens are; hence we have a fear that has affected a source of wealth and a measure of human happiness, for does the woman live who ought not, in the nature of things, to rejoice in the personal adornment of an opal? One of the most amusing instances of a trust in wrong things is reported from New York, where a man took an opal to a jeweller and asked him to sell it, as he had had nothing but bad luck since he owned it, his business ventures having failed, his children having suffered illness, and the Old Scratch having been to pay generally. The jeweller found the gem to be an imitation. Its falsity must have been obvious to everybody except the victim, because the opal is the one stone that has never been even passably imitated.

We used to read of the fairy's lamp, the will-o'-the-wisp, that led belated wanderers a merry dance through the wilds; but who ever sees a will now? I have been watching for years, in cemeteries and marshes and all promising places, yet never have I so much as caught a glimpse of his tail. Even dreams are less regarded than they used to be, and the dreamers would tax patience if they tried to interpret them in company. Somehow, people do not dream as fitly and prophetically as they did when the souls of Richard's victims stood at his bedside on Bosworth field, and when Marie de Medicis saw the pearls in her crown melt into tears.

And some of the old customs, based on superstitions: what has become of them?—are we really growing less superstitious, or more cautious in disclosing ourselves?—the "telling of the bees," for in-

stance. It was a pretty custom, but one seldom hears of it now. The little creatures had to be told when a death occurred in their master's house, the teller bending low and whispering his news at the entrance to the hive and begging them to remain, or they would be offended and go away. And "settin' up" with the corpse is seldom necessary in the country any longer. The dead stay dead without being watched into silence. Yet there are survivals of habit and law and belief that show us to be creatures of convention still. In Germany the old sun-worship is recalled in the shape of the pretzel, once an offering for the temples, while human sacrifice is held to be suggested in the red sugar on holiday gingerbread which is baked in the shape of men.

When we are assured that the left hind foot of a rabbit killed in a cemetery in the full of the moon at twelve o'clock at night on the thirteenth of the month by a red-headed, cross-eyed negro, riding on a white horse, is a charm of such potency that it has never been known to fail, we agree that it ought to be all kinds of good luck, because no such rabbit was ever killed. But any rabbit's foot will be treasured if it enable the owner to resist a glance of the evil eye or avert the tragic consequence of meeting a cross-eyed person or a hunchback—though you save yourself from the hunchback's malignant influence if you secretly touch his hump.

We give our hand to a friend to show that we have no dagger in it, and trust that he also carries none in his left hand. We bow to him on the street because our ancestors, in barbarian lands and times, bowed before an actual yoke which their lords or conquerors put upon them.

The old world, with its evil eyes, its spectres, its vampires, is impossible in our day, and on our side of the sea we must not look for beliefs in the supernatural among collegians. Canada and South America keep their jewelled snakes, their were-wolves, their healing statues, and their sacred springs; and, after all, there is a little softening of life in some of these fancies, or, if not that, at least some amusement that we, of all people, should not begrudge to ourselves. If our neighbors, the Kanucks, put a medal on their cow to keep her from coughing, if they nail a Latin prayer to the barn-door to keep off thieves, if they assure you that the Devil attends their fairs and merry-makings, wearing gloves to hide his claws and a high hat to conceal his horns, keeping his tail wrapped around his waist; if they tell you that the were-wolf is still about, eating children, and that the only way in which he can regain his human shape is to be stabbed by a friend, we may discover an interest in the circumstance, because these faiths and practices link us to a long-past history, and might mean something interesting, if we could fathom what.

THE SLAVERY OF MOISÉS

By Edwin Knight Buttolph



MOISÉS came in out of the dripping rain, slipped his worn and faded poncho over his head, and flung it on the bench which ran along the wall, and sat down with the air of a man prepared for the worst.

"How are you now, chiquita?—any better?"

"I think I'm worse, Moisés. Oh, I *must* have the doctor and some medicine; perhaps then I can get well!"

The child-wife began to cry—a weak, helpless sobbing, which was almost noiseless, but shook the frail figure in a way which wrung Moisés's tender heart.

"Don't cry, little one; don't cry, chiquita. I asked El Señor Medico to come and see you; but he said without a peso he came not. And I had not the peso, and so—and so—he is not here."

A wail from Lola was the only reply. Moisés sat in the poor little room, moodily watching the water drip from his ragged trousers, and puddling it into the clay of the floor with his bare brown toes. It was very hard. His six-months' wife was very ill,—so ill that she must be tended and fed and nursed like a little child. Neither of them had a relative who could be summoned to take care of her. So he had given up his position in Don Eloy Zembrano's brick-yard, where he earned five reals every day, excepting los Domingos las fiestas,—the festivals being if anything more numerous than the Sundays,—and came home to nurse his wife for a few days until she recovered. But the few days had dragged into weeks and months; Lola was no better; the slender savings which had been carefully tied up in an old rag and hidden in the sack of rice were exhausted now; so was the rice; and Don Eloy had another man in the brick-yard who was—so said his employer—"a better brickmaker than Moisés, because he had no wife." Moisés did not quite appreciate the logic of this statement; but Don Eloy did; and, after all, that was the main point. At first the village barber had tried his curing skill on Lola. But one day he came with two full bottles and an empty one in his alforjas. The empty bottle had been full when he left the village; now it was the barber who was full. The light was not very good in the house, and he left with Moisés the bottle which had been filled with a prescription for Don Eloy's

cow. Lola managed to survive this exchange of remedies; so did the cow; but there resulted a coolness between Moisés and the barber, and the latter came no more. Then Doña Juliana took the case. She had a great reputation in the community, for had she not raised five children? That each had died before it reached the age of three years was deplorable, but did not necessarily detract from the value of the Doña's healing art. Her chief reliance was on stimulants. Moisés bought "mataburro,"—a distillate of sugar-cane so named because it is credited with ability to kill a donkey under favorable circumstances,—Moisés bought mataburro with a lavish hand, marvelling the while that a frail young girl could consume so much and yet resist the potent influence. But one day he came home with a load of firewood and found his wife in a spasm of fright on the bed and Doña Juliana in a drunken stupor on the floor. The latter was forcibly ejected and spent the night in a convenient hollow by the roadside. The next day she said hard things of Moisés. And now a real Doctor Medico from Cuenca had come to the village, who undoubtedly could heal Lola if he would; but without a fee he would not. Moisés no longer had the fee. It was very hard!

By this time the puddle was so deep that Moisés's toes were quite hidden in it,—a fit type of the slough of despond in which the man's soul was sunk. Was there anything he could do? Suddenly he jumped to his feet and caught up the wet poncho.

"Where do you go?" asked Lola.

"To bring the Medico, even if I must needs kill him first."

"Oh, no!" wailed Lola. "He will be for me but a poor Medico if he is dead!" But Moisés was already gone.

"Señor, I would borrow eighty pesos. Will you do me the favor to lend them?"

Moisés tried to speak with the assurance of one who often negotiates a small temporary accommodation, but his voice shook in spite of himself, and he turned his old sombrero nervously in his hands.

"Eighty pesos!" snorted old Don Miguel, the Cæsar of the neighborhood,—*"eighty pesos! Would you not like to make it a thousand, my son?"* This last was said with an irony which might have crushed a weaker man. But Moisés held his ground.

"No, Señor; muchas gracias! Eighty will be quite enough."

Old Miguel gasped and then swore. "Maria Santissima! If your security equalled your assurance you might borrow ten thousand!"

"My security is good for eighty," said Moisés stoutly. "I am worth it, and I will be your peon until I pay."

Bravely as he spoke, Moisés's heart was heavy. He knew full well that peonage is but another name for slavery,—a bond which is oftener

loosed by death than by liquidation of the debt. But Don Miguel was not slow to grasp a good bargain. So they went before the Alcalde, and when they emerged Moisés was a slave. He must work for his padron as the latter commanded; he would receive a few cast-off garments to cover his nakedness and a daily allowance of two reals—twenty cents in silver—with which to buy food for his wife and himself. Yes, he was a slave, but he had eighty pesos in his pocket, and the Cuenca Doctor was still in town.

Three weeks later Moisés and Lola stood at their cottage door saying grateful farewells to Doctor Cuevas.

"Yes," said that ponderous gentleman, as he carefully tightened the cinch of his saddle, while his mule arched her back and grunted reproachfully; "yes, I go to-morrow to Cuenca. But you don't need me any longer, Señora; you are stronger and fatter than Moisés. So, hasta otra vista!"

"Adios, Señor Doctor!" they cried; and in her gratitude Lola added, "Que vaya con Diós (may God go with you)!"

Poor Moisés watched the portly Doctor's departure in silence. It grieved his thrifty soul to think how many of his hardly bought pesos had gone to increase the monetary circulation of Cuenca. He turned at last to his wife with half a sigh, and yet with a smile in his dark eyes.

"Doctors are very expensive, querida; but what does it matter, so long as you are well?"

In the gathering dusk Lola kissed him, but started back as she perceived little José, the son of Don Miguel, standing almost beside her.

"Buenas tardes, Señorita; buenas tardes, Don Moisés," said the urchin. "My father wants you to come and work in his rice-field to-morrow, Don Moisés."

"Very well, I will come, chico."

The lad drew himself up proudly. "You must not call me *boy*; you must say *Don José*."

Lola laughed and patted the boy's cheek. "A little caballero, are you not?"

"No," said this small gentleman thoughtfully,—“no, it is not that, Señorita; but my father's peon must not call me chico; it is not convenient."

"Peon!" gasped Lola. "But my husband is not a peon!"

"Si!" answered the youngster sturdily. "Si, Señorita, he is the peon of my father, Don Miguel." And with a wisdom beyond his eight years he made haste to depart.

"Moisés! Moisés! Querido mío, is it true?"

"Yes, it is true. There was no other way to get the Señor Doctor, little one. Don't cry, Lola! I shall soon be free."

But Lola was not to be comforted. "Oh Diós mio!" she sobbed, "I wish the Doctor had never come. I wish I were dead!"

It is not an easy thing to save money on an income of five dollars a month. So poor Moisés learned as he toiled through the long summer under the scorching equatorial sun. Though he did his best, somehow there was never anything left when Saturday night came and Don Miguel gave him the weekly wage of twelve reals. Lola must have good things to eat. As for him, he could avoid eating the costly meat and rice. Many a time, returning from work, he stopped to chat a moment with his friend, Juan de Diós Sánchez, and pick a banana in his luxuriant little garden. Then when he reached home he wanted nothing to eat "because he had supped with Don Juan de Diós." Lola once took occasion to thank old Doña Maria for her kindness in so often inviting Moisés to supper. Fortunately Doña Maria was slow of perception and hard of hearing. She could not imagine what Lola meant, so politely said, "It is nothing," and the dangerous topic passed. On Sunday mornings Moisés could eat nothing, because he must go fasting to confession and mass.

"You never used to be so devout," said Lola. "Then, you confessed twice a year; now, every Sunday. Why is it?"

"Because I am thankful to the good God for making you well, chiquita."

He meant it. It was not a pretence. Every Sunday morning he attended mass. There were plenty of bananas to be had for the asking along the road as he came home, and he was careful to stop and chat long enough with the owner of the fruit so that he could say, without undue strain to his conscience, "I want nothing to eat; I have breakfasted with Don Manuel."

"What a favorite you are!" Lola would say. "You eat half your meals in other people's houses."

She failed to see the hungry look in her husband's eyes as he watched her at her breakfast, and she hardly interpreted aright his solicitude that she should take her siesta in the worn hammock under the mango-tree while he cleared the table and washed the dishes—and greedily devoured the crumbs which she had left.

But it was all no use. He could save no money with all his sacrifices. Worse than that, bananas are not the most nourishing of foods. And as the dismal rainy season drew near Moisés became pale and thin, and lost much of his buoyant courage and good spirits. He worked moodily and almost feebly, while Lola cried a good deal at home—but only when Moisés was away.

Yet one evening he burst radiantly upon the astonished Lola.

"Don Miguel is going to Guayaquil to stay six months! He will not want me until he comes back. He says I may do anything I like,

provided I don't ask him for my two reals; and, Lola, the American Company want a house-boy, and they will try me. Twelve pesos a month—just think of it!"

"Twelve pesos!" exclaimed Lola. "Why, it's a fortune. But did you tell Don Miguel?"

"I'm not a fool," said Moisés scornfully. "If I told him, he would hire me to the company himself, pay me six pesos, and keep six."

"You are a genius, my husband!" Lola said delightedly. And then she sat down and cried, after the manner of women.

"This is enough to drive us all to drink!" said the manager of the American Mining Company, as he sat at dinner with his staff one evening. He was cutting into hash a piece of beef which would have served to sole a shoe, and blending the hash with rice fried in tallow.

"It's pretty tough," assented the engineer heartily. "But it has the merit of getting us in good shape to enjoy New York grub when we get back."

"I wouldn't mind it if I didn't have to consume so much formic acid in the original packages," said the chemist. He had come in late and was putting Worcestershire sauce in his soup to conceal the ants which formed an integral part of that beverage.

"Don't!" said the manager. "We shall not be able to eat New York grub because we'll all have dyspepsia. And as for the formic acid, it's simply unspeakable."

"It's more than that," said the doctor; "in continued doses it is distinctly prejudicial to the digestive function."

"I don't know what we're going to do about it," said the manager. "Our last regular cook was drunk for a week, and I had to put that stable boy in the kitchen. He said he could feed mules, and he guessed he could feed men. But this has got to be changed. Moisés, do you suppose you could cook something fit to eat?"

Moisés trembled as he recognized a main pivot of his life. "I can cook a little, Señor. I will try very hard."

"Bueno! Tell Andres to go back to the stable, send for another boy, and see if you can give us some beef which won't turn the knives, some rice without grease, and some soup without ants."

As a cook Moisés was a distinct success. After two days' trial the delighted manager gave him an old suit of clothes and the promise of twenty-five pesos a month. When Lola heard the news she laughed and cried, kissed Moisés, and fainted.

"Caramba!" said Moisés to himself in much perplexity; "with six pesos I faint from hunger; with twenty-five she faints from joy. Quien sabe? But God grant that Don Miguel come not again until the debt is paid; for what should we do with six pesos, and the little one soon coming?"

The rainy season ended, and there were now eighty pesos snugly hidden in the sack of rice. Only ten pesos of interest yet to earn. The market boy came from the village with the day's provisions on his mule. As he leisurely unslung a live turkey from the thong which tied its feet to the saddle he said to the cook:

"Don Miguel is home. He is coming down to-day to see the manager."

Moisés's heart almost stopped beating. As soon as the provisions were safely stored he went to the cashier.

"Señor, will you do me the great favor to lend me ten pesos? I need it very much, and you might take it from my wages at the end of this month."

It was the rule not to advance wages, and the cashier told him so.

"Por Diós! For the love of God, Señor, let me have ten pesos!" There was agony in the man's eyes, and the company's rule then and there met an exception.

Moisés walked up the hill to his house and arrived gasping, dug his savings out of the rice-sack, and fled before his wife could recover from her astonishment. Running down again through the portrero, he saw old Don Miguel ride up to the office door and dismount. If he could *only* intercept him before he saw the manager! Then the company need never know the disgraceful fact that he had been a peon. Trembling and panting, Moisés went towards the office,—and found Don Miguel waiting in the veranda, for the manager was busy.

"How do you do, Don Miguel?" The peon stood uncovered before his padron.

"Good-day," said Don Miguel. "How much are you earning here, Moisés?"

"That, Señor," replied Moisés very deferentially, "is none of your business."

"What?" spluttered the old man. "None of my business? I would have you know that what my peon earns is both my business and my property!"

"Can you prove that I am your peon?"

Don Miguel was speechless at such insolence. But he drew out the papers. Moisés's eyes glistened.

"Give me that paper—take your money!" He watched the counting of the money with the eyes of a hawk. "Is it right?—eighty pesos principal and ten pesos interest?"

"Yes, it is right." The admission was reluctantly made.

Moisés opened the paper and glanced at it. Then he got out his match-box, struck a light, touched it to the corner of the paper, and held the hated bond until it shrivelled into black, crackling ashes and the flame scorched his thumb. As the last glowing fragment floated to the floor Moisés turned suavely.

"Can you prove that I am or ever have been your peon, Señor?"

"It is not necessary to prove it."

"No, Señor, it is not necessary. It will not be even expedient. Moreover, the Señor Manager is very much occupied this morning. May I get your mule?"

He brought up the mule and held the stirrup, then bowed low as Don Miguel rode away in majestic silence.

"Viva la Compañia Americana!" said Moisés under his breath.

The office door opened and a visitor came out, followed by the manager.

"Did Don Miguel want to see me, Moisés?"

"No, Señor. He was looking for a peon. I told him that his peon was not here, and Don Miguel has gone."



IN MEDIA VITA

BY WILLA SIBERT CATHER

STREAMS of the Spring a-singing,
Winds of the May that blow,
Birds from the Southland winging,
And the buds in the grass below.
Clouds that speed hurrying over,
And the climbing rose by the wall,
The song of the bees in the clover,
And the dead, under all!

The lad and his lass a-lying
In the cleft o' the windy hill,
Hearts that are hushed of their sighing,
Lips that are tender and still.
Stars in the purple gloaming,
Flowers that suffuse and fall,
Twitter of bird-mates homing,
And the dead, under all!

The herdsman abroad with his collie,
The lass on her way to the fair,
Hot lads a-chasing their folly,
The parson a-saying his prayer.
Children their kites a-flying,
Grandsires that nod by the wall,
Mothers soft lullabies sighing,
And the dead, under all!

TONY

By Jessie Van Zile Belden



IT was probably a matter of comment in the servants' hall that the second floor of Senator Van Buren's house was curiously arranged. Some years before, when he had accepted the honor of representing a Western State in the United States Senate, he had been fortunate enough to find waiting for him in Washington a mansion just finished by a man who was forced to sell.

Mr. Van Buren was a self-made man in the sense of having overcome the incubus of inherited wealth, and, notwithstanding the fact that he had not been obliged to work his way through college, had become one of the foremost statesmen of the country. He had taken a personal interest in the fitting and furnishing of a large front chamber on the second floor separated from his own simple back room by a dressing-room. Violets seemed to pervade the room, and the same delicate colors were found in the draperies and furniture covering. The satin-wood, the low couch drawn up before the fire, the costly rugs, the dainty bric-a-brac, the fresh flowers daily, the tiny boudoir in old pink opening out of the violet room—all indicated the expected presence of a dainty and luxurious inmate. The door was always kept closed into the hall, so that guests never came from their charming quarters on the west side to partake of the soft cheer of the violet room. No one knew of its existence except Mr. Van Buren and the servants, and the latter were too well trained and too well paid to speak of a matter in which they had no interest. It is possible that Richard, the butler, who had served Mr. Van Buren's father, knew the why and wherefore, but if so he gave no sign.

A trying day in the Senate and a lonely consciousness that this was his birthday made the walk home rather dreary, and it was with a start of surprise that the Senator heard a small voice say,—

"May I walk home with you, sir?"

He looked down at the small figure of a boy whose pleasant brown eyes gazed frankly into his own. Mr. Van Buren's eyes twinkled, but he said gravely, "It will give me great pleasure, I assure you, sir, to have your company."

Confidingly the little hand crept into his and the Senator moderated his steps to the short strides of the boy.

"May I be permitted to ask your name?" said Mr. Van Buren.

"Tony," replied the boy, "and I am lonely here without my mother, and I noticed that you didn't seem to have any little boy, so I thought perhaps you would have time to talk to me."

"My boy," said the Senator, "you are the essence of the progressive American; his motto is, 'Find the want, then fill it.'"

They walked on, chatting gayly, until they came to the great house of the Senator. With a quick "Good-night" and a touch of the cap the child ran off. So this strange friendship began and waxed in strength through the month of March and into April. Mr. Van Buren would watch for the little figure, and if at any time the tiny cap was missing he felt a strange pull at his heart-strings, and somehow the evening never passed well.

One spring day as the boy joined him the Senator said: "Tony, we are pretty good friends. Don't you think you could dine with me to-night?"

"Why, yes, I think so," replied the boy, "but I must go and tell Rena."

"Just who is Rena?" asked Mr. Van Buren.

"Rena is—why, Rena is—Rena. She isn't just a nurse, and she doesn't teach me anything, so she isn't a governess, but when scarlet fever got into the school and mother was in Europe Rena came and got me and brought me here, and here we are going to stay until mother comes in May."

"That pretty well places 'Rena,'" thought the Senator, and he said: "Tell Rena that Richard will bring you home, so she need not worry. Seven o'clock, then," as they reached the house.

"Covers for two, Richard," said Mr. Van Buren as he entered.

He went upstairs, pausing at the fire in the violet room and watching the flames as they cast weird shadows on the wall. With a sigh he left the door ajar, so that a bit of the brightness might penetrate into his simple room.

Anthony Van Buren was good to look at. His hair was quite gray, but his face and athletic figure belied such indication of age. He had the face of one who had suffered and overcome. A great faith in the return of one who had gone out of his life amounted to a conviction and sustained him through weary years. He avoided intimacies, and suffered no man to come so near him that he could not call him "Mr." with propriety. Few knew the great heart under the stately manner, and save for a rumor that he had married and that his wife had left him a few months after the wedding nothing was known of him except his fine ancestry, his great wealth, and his ability as a statesman. His advice was often sought, and it was given most unselfishly and to the best of his understanding.

The clock chimed the three-quarters as he entered the library, and

at the same moment the bell announced his guest. As Richard said "Mr. Tony" he turned to greet a diminutive figure in a black velvet suit with deep collar and cuffs of priceless lace. The damp curls clung to the child's forehead, and in the large brown eyes was a haunting resemblance which came to the Senator with an odor of violets so delicate and elusive that it seemed but a memory. The child seemed more mature than in his reefer and cap, and the two had curiously changed places, for while the boy was quite at his ease, Mr. Van Buren was constrained. The past came rushing over him, and the thought "He could have been mine" came to him with a strange insistence.

Dinner was announced and Tony placed at Mr. Van Buren's right. No one ever occupied the seat at the other end of the table; it was always filled with flowers, even at the largest dinners.

The child's dainty ways pleased the Senator, and they were soon talking earnestly. It was not Mr. Van Buren's way to bring his conversation down to the so-called child's level, and he had long ago recognized the fact that whoever had had the bringing up of this boy had taken the same method. The child was not a prig, but had evidently been talked to as if he were an intelligent human being. They lingered over the dessert and had almost finished when the boy said:

"I am afraid I shall miss you, Mr. Senator. My mother is coming to-morrow, and then we are going North."

"Miss me, my boy? Perhaps so, but it is well you do not quite appreciate what you are taking from me. So your mother is coming. Are you like her?"

"Rena says I am just like my father, except my eyes. I hope so, because boys like to be like men, and Rena says my father was fine. But she always cries when she gets just there, so I can't ask her any more. I've got to hurry up and grow, so that I can take care of my mother. Women need men to take care of them, don't you think so, Mr. Senator?"

It was the first time the Senator had asked the boy a personal question, and he rose from the table and diverted the child so that the danger of question and answer could be avoided. The "Jungle Book" was on the library table. Tony looked wistfully at the Senator and said,—

Are you too tired to read me a story?"

Quite as a matter of course the child climbed to the arm of the Senator's chair, and as the story waxed in interest slid down into his lap. The man held the child close with one arm until the tale was done, and then, with a sudden, unsatisfied hunger, clasped him close and kissed his curls. It was growing late, and the boy must go. With an old-fashioned grace Tony held out his hand, saying:

"I have had a fine time, Mr. Senator. Thank you very much."

"I am not going out to-night, Richard," said Mr. Van Buren to the man as he came to escort the boy home. The library seemed empty and dreary after the boy had gone, and sleep was long in coming to Senator Van Buren that night. The next day Tony was not at the accustomed place, and a sudden cold wind drove around the corner, making the Senator button his coat. The following day was Sunday, and it was not until Monday that he felt a quick sensation of relief and pleasure at the sight of a cap and reefer waiting for him.

"Tony, I've missed you," acknowledged the Senator, "and I don't quite know what I am going to do when you go away."

"I shall miss you too," said Tony. "I have a note for you from mother."

"Come in then, dear, while I read it," said the Senator, and again an elusive odor of spring and violets came to him as he broke the seal and read:

"MY DEAR MR. VAN BUREN: Your great kindness to my boy makes me feel that I would like to thank you in person before we go North. I do not want you to come to this dreary place, this relic of forgotten grandeur, a boarding-house, so will beg that you will allow me to waive conventionality and, as we leave Wednesday, let me come with Tony at any hour which may suit your pleasure.

"I want to tell you how much I appreciate your friendliness to the lonely child.

"Cordially yours,

"L. C. ANDERSON."

"She undoubtedly thinks me a septuagenarian, and I probably am, from the boy's point of view," thought Mr. Van Buren. Then to the boy:

"Tony, your mother wants to come with you to-morrow. What do you say to bringing her to dinner? It will be our last day, you know."

"Oh," cried the child, "that would be beautiful, Mr. Senator. Shall I tell her?"

"Well, no," replied Mr. Van Buren, "we must be a bit more formal than that. I will send a note by Richard, but you may use your powers of persuasion." Then to himself, "Thanks to my gray hairs, I may have him once more." After the boy had gone the matter seemed a little more complex, and with an impatient "It is for the last time; she may be merciful," he wrote:

"MY DEAR MRS. ANDERSON: Will you be good enough to take dinner with Tony and me to-morrow at seven o'clock? I should hesitate to ask the favor, but I will miss the boy.

"Faithfully yours,

"ANTHONY VAN BUREN."

Richard was despatched with the note, and had his master been more observant he would have noticed later that the usually placid darcy was laboring under a certain suppressed excitement. The housemaid said to him as he passed her:

"What's the matter, Richard? You look 's though you had seen a ghost."

"So I hab, Tilly, so I hab," he replied, but vouchsafed nothing more.

Tuesday came, and Senator Van Buren made his great speech on expansion. His colleagues little dreamed as they saw him leave the chamber that his mind was filled with only this thought, that it was the last day with the little chap who had come into his life so strangely a few months before.

An unusual restlessness had taken possession of the calm Senator as he waited in the drawing-room for his guests. He had looked into some of the psychological problems of the day, and was more or less interested in the forces of the future—as they applied to others. Tonight he felt that some strange influence was about him, that some change was impending. As he walked up and down his thoughts went back over the years, and the man rebelled that this little life must drift out of his heart even as it had drifted in. He had not heard the bell, but a faint rustle of a woman's draperies going up the stairs and the sound of the child's voice in the smoking-room across the hall came to his ear. Suddenly he started. Could Richard have opened the door of the violet room? Surely there were steps in that room. Who had *dared* to go into *her* room? Perhaps someone had climbed in through his window. He went quietly and swiftly up the stairs, forgetting everything but the fact that someone was in that room, so sacred to him. The door, indeed, stood open; the fire shone out in the hall; the odor of violets filled his nostrils.

For an instant he paused, bewildered. Close to the fire stood a woman. Her white gown and great bunch of violets, her red-gold hair and glorious eyes, her appealing look, pierced his inner consciousness. With a low "Thank God!" he held out his arms. In an instant she was close to him. He kissed her softly once on the hair, and then, with a sudden passionate motion, lifted her from the floor, bending back until their lips met.

Whether minutes or hours had passed they never knew, but they were suddenly conscious of a child's voice saying, "I beg your pardon, Mr. Senator, but have you and mother forgotten to come down?"

Anthony Van Buren turned as one dazed and gathered the child to him; then, putting him down, said, with a strange catch in his voice, "Tony, will you be good enough to tell Richard to put your mother's place opposite mine at the table?"

"It is so, sir; dinner is served," came from the door in Richard's voice.

The child was more or less mystified during dinner and even after, for he was given the "Jungle Book" and a very good light in the library, while his mother and Mr. Senator held an earnest conversation in the drawing-room, and he did not attempt to understand the Senator's reply to a slight protest from his mother, "Richard and Rena will see to everything; I take no chances with Fate."

The atmosphere was too emotional for quiet explanation of the strange situation. It had all arisen from foolish gossip coming to a young wife, a similarity of names, and an opportunity for flight.

The low voice of the woman continued: "I took Irene" (Tony's Rena) "and went to England. There in an old English town Tony came to me, and when he was two years old we went to France. Two years ago I brought him home to put him in school. I was taken ill not long ago and went to Europe, leaving Tony in school, but with Rena to guard him. In some way Rena discovered the cruel blunder that made Anthony Van Buren bear Abram Van Buren's fault; then she found you, and quite without my knowledge brought Tony here."

"God bless Rena!" said the Senator under his breath.

"It was Richard who showed me into the violet room."

She paused as the sound of a long-drawn sigh came to them from the library. There on the couch, fast asleep, lay Tony.



CAN SUCH THINGS BE?

BY MADISON CAWEIN

MESEEMED that while she played, while softly yet
 Her fingers fell, as roses bloom by bloom,
 I listened, dead, within a mighty room,
 An ancient palace where great casements let
 Gaunt moonlight in, that glimpsed a parapet
 Of statued marble: in the arrased gloom
 Majestic pictures towered, dim as doom,
 The dreams of Titian and of Tintoret.
 And then, it seemed, adown a corridor,
 A mile of oak, a stricken footstep came,
 Hurrying yet slow . . . I thought long centuries
 Passed ere she entered—she, I loved of yore,
 For whom I died, who wildly wailed my name
 And bent and kissed me on the mouth and eyes.

OVERHEARD IN ARCADY

By Charles C. Abbott, M.D.

Author of "Travels in a Tree-Top," "The Birds About Us," etc.



"Ah, well-a-day, what eye may see
The forest tops of Arcady?"

I HAVE seen daily not only the forest tops of *my* Arcady, but have known the way since childhood. My own feet have worn the path thither, and whatever the season, whether the dog-star rages or winter rules the world, it is always Arcady under the old oaks.

My sense of hearing distinctly gains by lending no other to its assistance. Blind to all about me, not a sound but is more distinct and few escape recognition. So, comfortably seated, I close my eyes and listen. Then it is that charming tales are overheard in Arcady; and only then do those whisperings reach the ear that are not intended for other delectation than that of the whisperer. There are the songs of birds free to all the world, and those meditative melodies on so low a key that only a favored few have overheard them.

If by saying so much I have roused anyone's curiosity to the pitch of determining to overhear for himself, let him not be deluded with the idea that this harmless eavesdropping is an easy matter. All those birds that I have successfully approached were very sensitive to intrusion, and my patience was often well-nigh exhausted. Success was a mere chance more often than result of effort.

Probably the first time my attention was called to the whisper-songs of birds was forty years ago, when, one brisk March morning, I recorded of a foxy sparrow that "it was whispering to a withered oak-leaf." As I look now at the tattered and stained page of the old notebook I vividly recall the day. The sun shone brightly, the wind swayed the tops of the trees, the air on the upland fields was filled with a stinging dust, but where I stood there was warmth, quiet, and that clean and fresh condition suggesting the world's careful preparation here for the new guest, Spring. It was a prettier drawing-room than many I have seen with a ceiling much lower than the sky.

But a truce to comparisons, the bane alike of profitable meditation and of accurate description. The simple fact was, a foxy sparrow very near me began singing in so low a tone that I was in doubt whether it were a bird or a musical vesper-mouse sitting in the door-

way of his bush-nest. I had to look long to make sure of my first impression. It was a sparrow, and, as I then wrote, it "was whispering to an oak-leaf." So it seemed, that is; but let that pass. It was singing to itself. Surely not a note was loud enough to be heard half a rod away. There was little variation in the sound as I heard it; it was a humming rather than singing, and bore no resemblance to that delightful sunset-hymn so characteristic of the bird. My single impression of it was that of personal gratification. The bird was in a meditative mood. Its thoughts ran to music, as we should say of ourselves, recalling the words of some familiar song. As this is no uncommon trait among mankind, I do not see why the same habit should not be indulged in by birds.

Other explanations have been given, purely physical ones, but no other is necessary. The surroundings, the actions of the bird at the time, every extraneous circumstance, lead to the conclusion that the truth lies in the habit being a mental characteristic and not one related to any physical changes in progress.

Twice I have witnessed under most favorable circumstances the movements of a cardinal grosbeak when uttering what I venture to call his meditations, or whisper-song. The name counts for little, because all description must fail in accurately portraying this feature of bird-life. In each instance the cardinal was huddled up until more like a ball than a bird. A fluffy mass of red feathers was all that was to be seen, but there was heard the unmistakable whistling of the bird, sounding as if uttered by one of its fellows half a mile away. I made a slight noise and rustling of the dead leaves at my feet. Instantly the cardinal resumed its wide-awake attitude, scanned me for a moment, as if astonished at my near presence, and then darted away, chirping shrilly.

In the early summer of 1896 I had a disabled rose-breasted grosbeak in a cage. It soon became contented with its surroundings and was not startled by the near approach of any of the family. Every morning, commencing soon after sunrise, it sang as vigorously as any of its kind flying about the yard; and this is with us a common bird, nesting on the hillside and in the orchard. Again at evening the bird was given to singing in its matchless way, and I could detect no difference between its song and that of those about the premises. Besides this ordinary song of the rose-breast, I was frequently treated to a widely different one, heard only when all was quiet. It was truly a whispered song. It bore little resemblance to the grand outburst of melody intended for all the world to hear. It can be described best, I think, by calling it the echo of a distant flute. That the bird was intensely absorbed by its own music appeared evident from the swaying motion of the body at the time and an occasional trembling, accom-

panied by a ruffling of the feathers and nervous twitching of the tail. No "wood-notes wild" that I have ever heard are comparable to this wonderful whispered song of the rose-breast.

All observers are familiar with the incessant chirping of migrating birds, and many are the sweet songs when the red-wings throng the marshes and clouds of grakles sweep across the meadows. These birds are each a merry race, nowise akin, but lovers of the same scenes, and they have set the October landscapes to a lively tune. At times among the trees we hear the countless voices of some passing flock, perhaps of purple finches, the warblers, wax-wings, cow-pen birds, or larks. These are forever coming and going during delightful autumn days and add a joy to every hour of the mellow sunshine. Not one of these birds that I have named is ever mute or moody, and now, if we are alert and quick of ear, it will be found that they often twitter in so low a tone that it can be only intended for self-gratification. It is not whispering to a neighbor, for single birds separated from the flock are constantly chirping in that quiet way so suggestive of meditation. The nearest to a silent flock of birds is when we have the wax-wings passing over. The cow-pen bird is more voluble and not unmusically so, especially if we give it credit for good intentions. The attempt at song is a gurgle, not a splutter nor in any way suggestive of the bird's discomfort, and when we consider the enormous amount of noxious insect life it destroys, the cow-pen bird is found to overbalance the ills of its marital irregularities and is in no sense an outcast in the bird-world. Much hysterical rubbish has been written about this really interesting bird, more interesting, indeed, than the extremely proper nonentities among the finches and warblers.

Abusing the cow-pen bird, like abusing "cranks" among mankind, is to criticise adversely the stronger elements of a community but for which the world would become "stale, flat, and unprofitable." The cow-pen bird has its place in nature and fills it quite as creditably as some who have set up to be its judges. Aside from its one sin of not nursing its own young, it is a bird worth noticing, particularly in winter,—it is always common here at this season,—when, associated with tree-sparrows and snow-birds and in the bright sunshine of a January day, it adds its quota to the fun of a winter jubilee. As has been well said, his "forlorn, broken-winded whistle" is at least "amusing,"—much more so than the silliness uttered about the bird.

There is no other instance when the whisper-song is so readily overheard as in the case of the white-throated sparrow. Indeed, for days together, as these birds linger on a hill's south side and scarcely move from the thicket they frequent, there is little else heard than the meditative, self-entertaining notes. As all are singing at short intervals, it

would seem as if no one individual had time or inclination to listen to the others. It always is to me as dreamy a sound as the buzz of a house-fly during the quiet hours of a summer afternoon.

Now, the white-throated sparrow is not with us an active bird. It is restless at times, but not given to violent exertion. With a full stomach, the height of its ambition, existence becomes a period of restful meditation, and it is little wonder that with nothing else to do these birds should whistle. Not like the cardinal, clear and loud, or mandatory, as the Carolina wren, shouting "*Listen! listen! listen!*" but like the weary man who is at last at his ease, and hums a few notes or whistles a bar or two as an expression of relief.

"*Easy, easy, let me be!*" warbles the white-throat; occasionally so distinctly that the woods are filled with the sound, more often set at so low a pitch that you must be very near to determine that it is this, or, indeed, any, bird that you hear.

I think both the tree-sparrow and the snow-bird have their whisper-songs. Certainly they twitter without ceasing except when asleep, and they are here during those months when vocal efforts may be classed as necessary rather than voluntary or not musical for the music's sake. But there is one variation from this. If you creep carefully into a thicket and wait until your presence ceases to cause suspicion, the chances are that you will hear a few low notes of the typical nesting-day song. Observing the bird's manner at such a time, it reminds one of a person trying to recall a song by whistling in an undertone. This surely the bird is not doing, but singing in a whispering way to please its passing whim.

Two birds very familiar to the persistent rambler are the tree-creeper and winter wren. Weeks may pass and you will hear nothing but a chirp, and often the wren will not so much as twitter when alarmed, but patience will probably be rewarded at least once in a winter by hearing a few sweet notes, perhaps several times repeated, and then the old mute manner is resumed.

In the case of the tree-creeper, the petulant squeak is not always uttered even when you go quite near and interrupt the bird's progress about the trunk of a tree. The same is true of the winter wren. It is swift and silent as a mouse at times, and rarely chirps while here, in winter, except as I have mentioned. It can scarcely be denied that when these two birds do give way to song there must be some strong incentive, and the few warbled notes have no reference to aught beyond themselves.

The woodpeckers are a noisy race mechanically and vocally, but no note of theirs can be called musical, nor has any the significance of a thrush's song. The golden-winged woodpecker, forever screaming, chattering, and much given to exclamations of surprise, occasionally

also thinks aloud, for I have often surprised it, when alone, chuckling and chattering to itself, as I have known some very old women to do.

The surroundings tell the true story. The bird is meditating. Possibly what I have heard is analogous to the grunt of satisfaction after a full meal. The song of the English robin has been stated to lack in autumn "the joyousness of spring, and the bird, in sympathy with the departing season, seems to breathe a plaintive and melancholy strain." I prefer, after much observation, to use in such instances among our own birds the term "meditative" rather than "melancholy."

In wondrous contrast to the woodpeckers are the two foremost resident song-birds, as joyous and as given to singing in January as in June. These are the Carolina wren and crested tit. Either can be heard a full half-mile away on a still, clear day; yet I have surprised both these birds singing their familiar songs, or parts of them, in so low a key that it was by mere chance that I heard them at all. These birds clearly indicate that "whisper-songs" are not an evidence of any peculiar physical condition. The moment following their utterance they may cause the woods to ring with their exultations, for no songs in the Jersey woods are more suggestive of victory—not over a fallen foe, but over the efforts of winter to dislodge them—not even those of the host of summer songsters. The Carolina wren and crested tit nearly reach the highest ideals in the bird-world.

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But one conclusion can be drawn, I think, from the study of these trifles of melody that scarcely break the silence. They point to a higher plane of mentality than we usually credit birds with possessing. They point to appreciation of leisure, of a relief from the many cares that enter their lives. As the tired laborer goes homeward from his work at close of day he is apt to express his pleasure by whistling as he walks. Akin to this is the meditative undertone of many a bird when, contented and safe, it expresses its feelings in a whispered song.

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THE TOMB OF SHAKESPEARE

BY EDMUND VANCE COOKE

SUCH was his greatness, we may stand to-day
As at his grave, though half the world away.
It matters little where his dust may lie;
Earth is his coffin, and his vault the sky.

THE SUPREME COURT OF LOVE

By Julia MacNair Wright



WHEN the Venning Will Case went against Julius North several of his friends, like the three men of the Orient, "made an appointment to come to mourn and to weep with him." The CASE concerned nothing less than the ownership of that magnificent pile, the TAJ, where Julius had his suite of rooms.

The friends left at ten, and Julius gave them his word of honor that he would carry his case up to the highest court in the land before he accepted defeat. Julius seated himself at his desk to write to a client, Miss Lester. He was nervous, and cast four rejected letters open on the desk. Then he flung his shoes into a corner and threw his coat after them. A sudden thought electrified him into intense brain action: he sat down and applied himself to the points in the Venning Will Case.

On the street below Eugene Todd, in a state of vinous idiocy, was supporting a post. Towards Eugene came skimming a tall, slender figure wrapped in a long cloak and with a lace scarf on its head.

"Jove!" gurgled Todd, "tha's my sist'r Jinny!"

The darting figure swerved. Todd lunged after.

"Jinny! see home," and with feet too wide apart, inebriety followed flying grace.

The fugitive saw the open door of the Taj and sprang in. The elevator was up. The fair intruder fled along the stairs.

"One, two, four—oh, here I am. They're home," and slipped into the open door of Julius North's room.

"Harriet! Harriet!" she called softly, raised a portière, saw an absorbed man in his shirt-sleeves, drew back to the outer door,—and heard the uncertain steps and incessant gurgle of words of Todd in pursuit! She retreated again behind the portière, tossed her cloak and scarf under a chair, dropped into its soft depths, and closed her eyes. But, oh misery! she had not quite shut that outer door. Its ray of light attracted Todd, and into that quiet realm of domestic peace stumbled the son of Bacchus, bawling,—

"Jinny!"

Up sprang Julius.

"Why, Todd—what are *you* after?"

"Jinny—saw her comin' here."

"What, you fool?" roared Julius.

"Yes—or a ghost—'twas a ghost—it's white—I see it sittin'——"

"Ghost! Oh-h-h-h-h!" Patti couldn't have surpassed that sweet, well-modulated scream. A dainty, warm love of a hand slipped under North's arm, an exquisite somebody clung to him, a lovely face full of simulated alarm, wide, violet eyes, looked up at him.

"Oh! *do* you think a ghost is in *our* house?"

"No wonder your wife's scared," said Todd, swaying. "Say, North, thought you wasn't married—thought you was sweet on Jinny. Where's Jinny?"

Where was Julius? He had gone to his desk a bachelor, defeated plaintiff; he returned to consciousness married, evidently, with a bewitching wife clinging to him. Was this witchcraft? Being of the nineteenth century, North said under his breath, "Thunder!" and ordered Todd to "come along to the elevator."

The charming stranger released North's arm and relapsed into the big chair. She must ask this shirt-sleeved Apollo to take her home; she felt sure stairs and streets were lined with duplicates of Todd.

The head of Julius was in a whirl. What mysterious angel was this? what heavenly visitant? He was at his door again, and there, seated at his desk, cheek on her pink palm, the angel was reading his letters to Miss Lester! He tumbled from the clouds, and said angrily,—

"You have taken possession of my house and my correspondence——"

She laughed up into his face.

"Cannot I read letters addressed to me? I am Lallege Lester. Aunt and I came to the city yesterday. I have been to see a sick friend,—I thought a two-blocks walk safe enough,—but I stayed too late, and that terrible drunken fellow frightened me into the Taj. I counted the floors wrong. I thought this was Mrs. Gates's suite. I will go up there at once."

"It is locked. The Gateses went to Chicago to-day."

"Then please take me to Aunt Susan at once. That drunken idiot won't remember anything, will he?" Julius grew malicious.

"Don't flatter yourself. He remembers everything. To-morrow he'll tell all his family of my changed state and have them over to call on the happy pair." Lallege waxed wrathful.

"Will you take me home at once?" Then a step sounded in the hall, and Fred Ames's voice called,—

"Ho, North, I'm glad you're not locked up!"

Julius glared. Miss Lester darted into the nearest open room and shut the door. Fred appeared as a cyclone.

"Laid my light coat on your bed, and my cipher-book fell out of the pocket. It must be there. I'll run in and find it." He seized the door Lallege had closed. Julius endured one awful second. His heart resumed its functions. Blessed be Lallege! "Locked! Open the door quick, North, I'm in no end of a hurry!"

"The man—the waiter fellow—must have taken off the key," gasped Julius.

"Must I wait all night?" growled Fred; and the silence grew profound—with an unexpected result. The impatient Lallege considered both men gone—and came out! Julius being of irreproachable fame, Fred, beholding this dazzling creature at home in the inner sanctum, cried,—

"Great Justice!" Julius rose to the occasion.

"Exactly. *Fiat justitiæ.*" He drew Miss Lester's hand to his arm.

"Allow me to present my wife." *Salut en grand tenue.*

"So—sudden," said Fred.

"Very. No cards—and no cake," said Julius.

"Here's your cipher-book," said Lallege, holding it out.

"The Taj," said North, would have been such a splendid wedding-gift to my wife, and, Fred, you'll keep the matter quiet until we announce it ourselves—soon?"

"Certainly—word of honor—make your own announcement." Fred disappeared. Lallege sank into a seat.

"Isn't it terrible?"

"Perfectly awful," groaned Julius.

"How *could* you tell such hideous untruths?" demanded Lallege.

"Let us make it truth. How soon can those cards be got out?"

"Never!" cried Lallege. "How dare you—to tell such falsehoods?"

"Seemed a work of necessity and mercy. We've corresponded—on business, it is true—for two years. I have looked within the gates of Paradise. Don't close them on me, I entreat."

"Will you take me home? I condemn your statement utterly."

"Oh! And what did *you* give Todd to infer, Miss Lester?"

"Aunt will be frantic about me. Don't stand gazing! I am not accustomed to seeing men in shirt-sleeves and slippers."

"Pardon my undress," said Julius humbly.

"All is my fault," said Lallege sweetly. "Aunt will be in *such* a state." Shoes in one hand, coat in the other, Julius pleaded his case.

"Consider—the inferences—of Todd—my word to Ames."

Lallege started for the door.

"Our doom is sealed," cried Julius. "Let us conform to it. Make me the happiest of men by your perpetual presence." He fell into his coat and shoes, took his hat, and reached her side, still fluent.

"I will be the happiest of men, as I am now the best——" Lallege started back, chill despair in her tones.

"Our doom is sealed. Mr. North, the stairs are full of people!"

"Tracy, Dill, Hastings, Hunt. I know the voices—the men who left an hour ago. Quick! step behind that curtain!"

"Elevator's stuck!" shouted the returned friends. "Heard the news? Eustis Sandys is dead—fell dead at the Munger House as they were congratulating him on winning the Venning Will Case!" There was a little shriek behind the curtain. *Would* that girl betray herself? Instantly Julius swept back his arm and knocked a large vase from its bracket. The sound of breakage mingled with and obliterated that low cry on its way to the ears of his excited friends.

"Poor fellow!" said North with conviction.

"Who's his heir? There'll be a new defendant for you to fight."

Would they never go? They discussed the affair endlessly. There was Lallege behind the curtain, while her aunt in convulsions occupied the background of North's thoughts. Twelve struck. At last they were gone. Lallege emerged from the silken folds. North stooped to recover her fallen cloak and scarf. As he bent behind the drapery Lallege heard a step ring on the mosaic of the hall. A virile voice sounded,—

"North! What, Julius, still on deck?"

"Goodness!" said Lallege wildly. "*Do* you hold all-night receptions for your men friends?"

The curtain was hopelessly disarranged, but the room had a little balcony upon which a glass door, silk draped, opened. This door was near. Lallege stepped to the balcony and pulled the door after her, but it did not quite close, and she dared not touch it again, for the strong voice spoke in the room she had left,—

"So you heard of Sandys's death?" This was Pettibone, leading counsel for North in the "VENNING WILL CASE."

He detailed Sandys's sudden death, of which he had been witness. Lallege listened, the lights of the city below her feet, the lights of heaven scintillant above her head, something strangely persistent and suasive in North's recent tones and words ringing in her heart.

"Confound it, North, where is all this draught coming from? You seem to live in the Cave of the Winds!"

Pettibone was elderly and testy. He spied the balcony door and tried to crowd it shut. It rebelled, because a fold of Miss Lester's gown lay upon the lower hinge. Pettibone jerked the door wide open to see what was the matter. Lo! a very beautiful young woman in a flowered

silk home-dress with point-lace at neck and sleeves. Pettibone had lived long in a wicked world, and had conceived no very flattering opinion of its inhabitants—men differed in wickedness only in degree. Pettibone whistled.

A spark in a powder-barrel produces immediate results. Lallege had, life-long, been adulated, accustomed to hats off and deference. She had never before been whistled at. Rage overtopped all other emotions—all resolves. She had but one refuge from this low-minded, insufferable, hideous, inopportune, hateful old man! That refuge was Julius North himself. Something of the tranquil, unsearchable, protective strength of the skies, at which she had just been gazing, seemed in his face as he stepped towards her when she was revealed by Pettibone's act. Lallege did not hesitate; she moved proudly into the room, took North's arm, leaned on it confidentially, and in the sweetest of voices said:

"My dear, perhaps the room is cold. *We* do not feel a chill as *old* people do. No doubt your friend has rheumatism."

Now, this was distinctly venomous, for Pettibone was always grasping at a vanished youth, and fought fiercely the encroachments and approaches of age. Then Lallege and Julius looked each other in the face.

His eyes were overflowing with admiration, joy, and triumph; hers were ingenuous, sweet, consenting. The circle of the evening's events was now complete. Lallege had invaded North's domicile unbidden; North had made all possible delays about seeing her home.

Lallege had misled Todd; Julius had boldly forsworn himself to Fred Ames; Lallege it was who undertook to hoodwink old Pettibone. Julius was jubilantly resolute to have no mistake made here at the last, no loophole for this delicious creature's retreat.

"Yes, yes, Pettibone," he said, his words ecstatically tumbling over each other, "close the door. Mrs. North will not object. Mrs. North, may I present my lawyer, Mr. Pettibone? Pettibone, congratulations are now in order, although we had not intended to publish the fact quite so soon."

"Congratulations! I should say so," cried Pettibone, regarding with pleasure the handsome pair. "Happy man! What a march you have stolen upon us! Mrs. North, my ignorance of your presence must plead my excuse for my unceremonious entrance at this hour. Such a tremendous incident as Sandys's death hurried me here to see North and learn whether he will carry his case up or come, if possible, to some understanding with the new defendant."

"The case," said Lallege calmly, as he leaned on North's arm, "will not be carried up. How can it be? I am Mr. Sandys's heir, and, of course, Mr. North and I have all things in common."

She shot a covert glance at North, who perhaps had not dared to sue in such ardent haste for the hand which held the Taj in its dimpled softness.

"Mr. Sandys's heir?" demanded Pettibone.

"Yes, his nearest kin and universal legatee," said Lallege.

"You are—were, I mean—then, Miss Lallege Lester," said Pettibone, looking for his hat. "So the Venning Will Case, North, will not be carried to the Supreme Court?"

"It has been carried there and decided in my favor," said North. "What court is higher than the Supreme Court of Love?"

Pettibone shook hands and disappeared, stupefied.

"Take me home at once," said Lallege firmly, "before the remainder of your dear five hundred friends appear. What state do you suppose aunt is in? I know she has sent to all the police stations and is having me shouted for by the town crier. No doubt she will die of fright."

Prognostications of awful consequences to her aunt were continued—with a view to keeping North silent—as the two passed under the arched portal of the Taj, and so out beneath the stars.



THE MONUMENT

BY DALLETT FUGUET

HERE rests the brave—how eloquent still!—
 Who followed truth through strife;
 And wrought for law and country till
 His very death was Life.

Ghostlike, upon the street, goes by
 The restless human tide.
 O small-browed ones, he cannot die;
 But ye, who walk, have died.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

To the Pacific and Mexico. By Colonel A. K. McClure.

"Every intelligent and public-spirited citizen of the United States should traverse his country at least once in every decade, or he must fall behind complete knowledge and just appreciation of the grandeur and growth of the Republic," writes Colonel McClure. But there is this limitation imposed upon most of us, that that combination of favoring circumstances called "opportunity" is often denied us. In such a case the most efficient substitute is found in the perusal of such a volume as this, which, coming from the pen of a veteran journalist, combines happily that gift of observation and power of description so characteristic of American journalism.

"These letters are given to the public," he writes, "without any special claim to literary merit, as they were written for the *Philadelphia Times* amidst the exactions of a journey across the continent to the Pacific and thence to the City of Mexico, with little time for preparation. . . . The interesting scenery of our Western mountains and on the Pacific, and the vastly more interesting historical lessons in Mexico, inspired the author to present in these letters the convictions which the impressive studies make for the observant traveller. The letters are given without revision, thus presenting to the public the varied impressions made at different stages of a hasty journey of nearly ten thousand miles . . ." across the continent to San Francisco, thence by El Paso to the City of Mexico, thence home by Eagle Pass, San Antonio, and New Orleans. Vivid and graphic pictures abound of Denver, Salt Lake City, and San Francisco, and of the maligned "Great American Desert," the scenery of the Sierras and the Rockies, and the "vast level wheat-belt that extends from the foot of the mountains to the Pacific . . . one broad expanse of promising and boundless harvest;" and following the writer into Mexico, we see the City of Mexico, the palace of Chapultepec, with its memories of Maximilian and the beautiful Carlotta, and the most interesting mountain scenery that can be found anywhere on the continent,—Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl and the snowy peak of Orizaba. "I have now been for over two weeks traversing the mountains and valleys of our own country and of Mexico. At no time since I reached Denver—along the entire journey of nearly one thousand miles across the Rockies and Sierras to the plains of the Pacific slope, then down through California and our Territories to the Rio Grande, followed by a journey of nearly fifteen hundred miles in Mexico—can the tourist turn in any direction without seeing the majestic cliffs, often broken in wild confusion, varying in height from the spurs which descend into the valleys to the immense pyramids of rugged rock which are crowned in perpetual snow," the author writes in the closing pages of his book. From the Lippincott Press.

A Manual of Coaching. By Fairman Rogers. Illustrated.

It is much to be doubted if any auto-device or bicycle will ever supplant the horse, for pleasure excursions, at least, and it is generally conceded that coaching is, of all forms of driving, the most enjoyable. It seems particularly appropriate to the time of year, therefore, that a new issue of Fairman Rogers's "Manual of Coaching" should be given the public. The book is all that its name implies, and more—it might with justice be called an encyclopaedia of coaching, containing, as it does, the most minute treatment of

the art in all its details of coaches, harness, horses, and their employment, even down to the men and their duties. The numerous illustrations serve to enhance both the interest and value of the work, and its general mechanical appearance is in line with the other Lippincott publications.

How to Cook for the Sick. By Helene V. Sachse.

With the passing of Sairy Gamp and the advent of the trained nurse the methods of cooking for the sick have changed materially, so that the diet of a patient is to-day often almost as important a part of the curative treatment as is the actual medicine prescribed by the physician. Hence this book, written by Miss Sachse primarily for the perusal of her co-workers in her profession, though it is not less indispensable to every house-mother, especially if she have young children. It comes from the Lippincott Press, bearing the endorsement of prominent medical authority; and, as nursing is the hand-maid of medicine, so may the book justly be considered the hand-maid of the long list of other standard medical works for which the Lippincott House is noted.

A Queen of Hearts. By Elizabeth Phipps Train.

Limitless opportunities would seem to lie in the idea of a famous danseuse married to a nonconformist parson,—opportunities of both comedy and tragedy; and under the cunning hand of so capable a story-teller as Elizabeth Phipps Train no iota of the possibilities is lost. Born in the stifling and uncongenial environment of a provincial village, the daughter of a French musician and a maiden of the village, the artiste became the ward of a pious man in whose eyes nothing was more detestable than was the Satanic practice known as dancing. Unfortunately, however, her father's artistic temperament took just this mode of expression in the nature of the artiste, and so it happened that on a day the pious man found his ward pirouetting to the music of the shoemaker's fiddle in an old loft over the cobbling-shop. Having wrestled with her soul until she arrived at the nervous condition called "conversion," he married this hapless girl, and for over a year she took up the deadly grind of the life. But the inherited vagabond spirit broke out, as was inevitable, and she ran away to New York, leaving behind her baby daughter,—for which, unfortunately, she had never had any maternal feeling; and shortly she appeared on the stage as Mademoiselle Cléo, "a danseuse of incomparable merit and talent." Her whole professional career, though phenomenally successful, was marred by the bitterest trials; for her daughter, who at the death of her husband she had placed in a convent, must be kept in ignorance of her mother's profession, and her father—the French musician, who had turned up as a servant in the house of some acquaintances—had entered into a conspiracy to reveal the secret. Here, then, we have the idea of the current issue in Lippincott's *Select Novels*; upon this outline the tale runs along excitingly and entertainingly to an artistic climax. A noticeable element is the strongly dramatic atmosphere that pervades "A Queen of Hearts;" in fact, Miss Train's talent is characteristically dramatic, as is evidenced in "A Social Highwayman" and "A Marital Liability," the former of which, indeed, has actually become a fixture on the boards. In paper and cloth bindings.

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